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Promoting Sustainable Development Through More Effective Civil Society Participation in Environmental Governance

A Selection of Country Case Studies from the EU-NGOs Project



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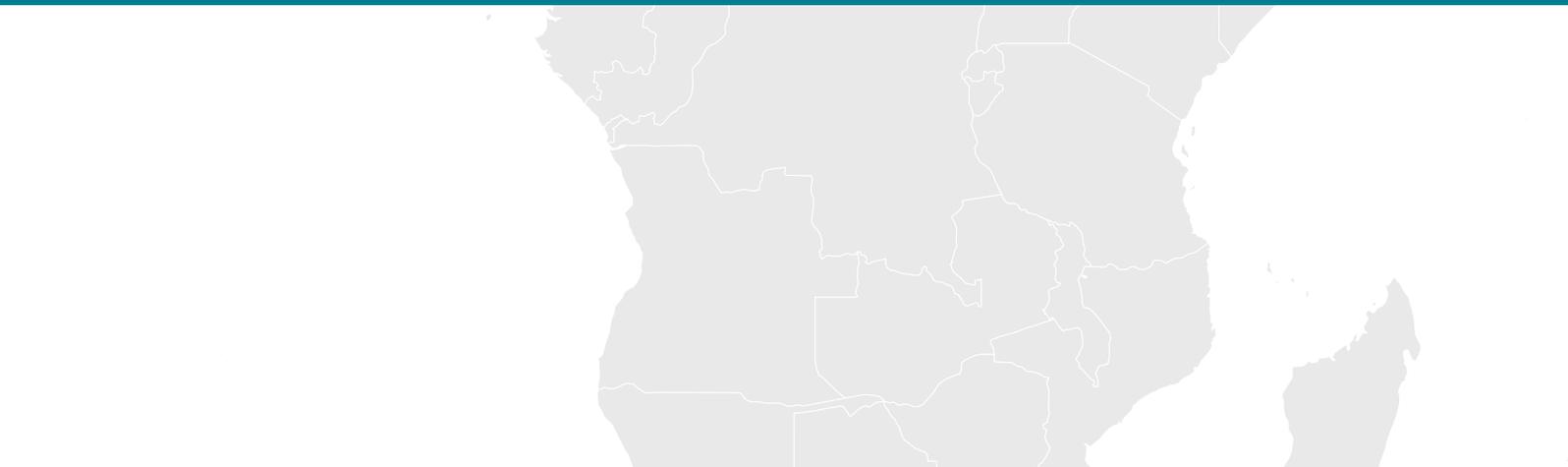
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PART 1
The EU-NGOs Project



1. INTRODUCTION TO THE EU-NGOs ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE PROJECT

The EU-NGOs Project “*Strengthening Environmental Governance by Building the Capacity of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)*” is a global project funded by the European Union (EU), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and delivered and co-financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP). The project aims to promote sustainable development and improved environmental management in target countries from two neighboring regions of the European Region through more effective civil society participation in environmental governance.

Civil society has become a critical stakeholder in environmental decision-making processes and a valued partner in implementing and monitoring environmental policies at the local, national, and global levels. When their capacities are adequately developed, civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can provide technical assistance to communities and support environment and development programs at the local level, while providing policy recommendations to local and national governments and facilitating communication between the government and local actors.

The EU-NGOs Project focuses primarily on strengthening the external and internal capacities of NGOs and developing professional skills for environmental governance. It provides small grants to several NGO-led projects per participating country, approaching enhanced environmental governance from different angles. The EU-NGOs Project improves NGOs’ capacities to participate in an informed and skilled manner in environmental policy formulation and natural resource management, collaborate in decision-making on key issues, and represent the interests of citizens and communities in environment and sustainable development discussions and debates. By promoting coordination and knowledge exchange among NGOs and other partners, the project aims to have a wider influence on civil society capacity to engage with governments in the tasks and activities of environmental governance.

UNDP has over two decades of experience working with local civil society on environmental management programmes through SGP. It is thus well positioned to support CSOs and NGOs in undertaking coordinated actions to deepen their participation in environmental governance, generating both local and global sustainable development benefits. Since 2012, the UNDP-EU NGOs Project has been supporting 13 countries to the East and South of the European Union, with more than 60 projects promoting effective civil society participation in environmental governance. The Programme started its first phase in eight countries: Armenia, Belarus, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Tunisia and Ukraine. Five additional countries joined during the second phase of the project in 2014: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Morocco.

This publication has the following principal purposes:

- » Outline the conceptual basis of the EU-NGOs Project and its community-led approach to strengthening environmental governance by increasing civil society participation in related processes;
- » Present a selection of eight EU-NGOs country case studies setting the local context based on which supported initiatives were developed, describing project activities and objectives, as well as reporting on key achievements, impacts and lessons learned from these on-the-ground initiatives;
- » Highlight some key overall impacts and lessons learned from on-the-ground implementation of community-led projects related to environmental governance in EU-neighboring countries.

This publication presents a wealth of examples of on-the-ground initiatives, achievements and lessons learned from the EU-NGOs Project in countries to the East and South of the EU. These community-led initiatives include directly tackling sustainable waste, water and forest management; providing environmental information to raise public awareness and inform local and national decision-making and policy processes; and creating multistakeholder monitoring committees to facilitate more effective environmental management and accountability, among others. EU-NGOs country programmes placed a large focus on involving communities and civil society in environmental decision and policy making processes, aiming to create a more enabling regulatory framework for civil society engagement and to influence and facilitate suitable local and national environmental policies across different sectors, promoting participatory sustainable development.

The EU-NGOs project has produced considerable results with positive effects beyond the supported NGOs, as a large number of CSOs and NGOs have been reached through such tools as a training-of-trainers approach, partnerships, and dedicated networks. The case studies provided in this report aim to share valuable insights to such approaches that can be used as a basis for replication in similar initiatives around the world. Since some local projects were still ongoing during the development of this publication, this report does not attempt to provide a complete overview of project results or an analysis of the Project's effectiveness and impacts overall.



Multistakeholder dialogue in preparation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, Belarusian Geographic Society, EU-NGOs Belarus

2. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE AT THE LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

Environmental governance refers to the institutions, policies, rules, and practices that mediate how governments, the private sector, and civil society interact with the environment at local, national and international levels. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, or Rio Earth Summit, in 1992 and the promulgation of Agenda 21, the engagement of civil society actors, primarily NGOs, has become accepted practice for environmental governance in the international arena and in many world regions and countries.

Effective environmental governance ensures the participation of all actors – governments, NGOs, the private sector, civil society and community groups, ordinary citizens – in collaborative efforts towards environmentally sustainable development. This kind of environmental governance constitutes an alternative to the conventional top-down government policy-making and regulation that have prevailed in the two regions in question, because it involves citizens and civil society organizations in identifying, creating, and monitoring environment and sustainable development policies and processes. The rationale is at least twofold: citizens and communities should have a voice in articulating the environmental problems and policies that affect them, and a role in managing natural public goods and the environmental commons. In other words, the diverse stakeholders who are affected by environment and sustainable development policies and impacts should be able to participate in devising and monitoring them.

3. CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Civil society plays a key role in bridging the information and exchange gap between the population and policy. It can support information collection and dissemination, policy development, policy implementation, advocacy, as well as assessment and monitoring, making sure that concerns of those affected by environmental challenges and policies are considered in environmental governance. NGOs also promote networking of different stakeholders to address issues in a collaborative manner and help to develop the skills and mindset necessary for sustainable management of (natural) resources. Besides from advisory and support roles, civil society organizations can also take on a more direct role in environmental management and governance, for example, through representation on multistakeholder governance platforms such as river basin authorities or fisheries management councils, thereby functioning as principal actors and agents for good governance.

Civil society covers a wide range of actors, including individuals, religious and academic institutions, and issue-focused groups such as not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations. In the environmental governance space, NGOs are usually the most prominent actors and are, therefore, the predominant type of EU-NGOs grantees. NGOs involved in environmental governance usually have missions dedicated to environmental protection, sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and animal welfare, among other issues. Their type of involvement and operations varies by organization but can cover local, national, regional, and/or international levels.¹

¹ Gemmill, Barbara, and Abimbola Bamidele-Izu: *"The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Global Environmental Governance"* in Daniel Esty and Maria Ivanova *"Global Environmental Governance: Options and Opportunities"*, Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy, 2002.



Waste removal initiative, Moldovan Environmental Governance Academy (MEGA), EU-NGOs Moldova

The Role of NGOs

In particular, NGOs can take on a broad spectrum of functions in environmental governance. These include, but are not limited to:

- » **Mobilization of public opinion:** NGOs can spread awareness and influence public opinion through informational campaigns and broad outreach;
- » **Representation of the voiceless:** NGOs can help vocalize civil interests, which are often under-represented in policy-making, and facilitate constructive dialogue between civil society and authorities;
- » **Expert analysis and recommendations:** NGOs can provide access to competing ideas from outside the usual bureaucratic channels to policy makers and politicians, thereby facilitating negotiations and carrying the public voice and concerns to the policy level;
- » **Response capacity to manage shocks:** NGOs often demonstrate better technical and analytical capacity and skills to respond faster than government officials and offer informed suggestions for appropriate actions;
- » **Management and implementation:** NGOs can contribute technical expertise on environmental challenges and solutions as well as directly participate in operational activities, supporting implementation and management of environmental projects and programmes by governments;
- » **Monitoring:** NGOs can support the strengthening of agreements through monitoring of negotiation efforts as well as governmental compliance;
- » **Legitimization of decision-making mechanisms:** NGOs can extend information base for decision-making, enhancing the quality, authoritativeness, and legitimacy of the policy choices of international organizations.²

² Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu (2002).

Barriers and Opportunities

Although democratization and participatory processes have made significant headway in EU neighboring countries in recent years, civil society participation in environmental governance remains weak. While the majority of governments agree that NGO participation is imperative, there are still fears that the disadvantages of civil society participation could outweigh the benefits. In some cases, local and national authorities hold the perception that NGOs might constitute special interest groups, with their participation resulting in policy distortions by incorporating their own agenda, for example, opposing economic development in favor of environmental conservation. In very few cases, there is also some anxiety that NGOs may seek to assume the sovereign powers of governments, with the result that government authorities feel threatened by their involvement.

However, considering the advantages of civil society involvement, these concerns may seem irrelevant and unjustified. Indeed, most governments do concede a role for civil society in environmental governance, and given their own financial, technical, and personnel constraints in the face of increasing environmental challenges, many would welcome assistance from NGOs. Civil society can spur the political will for new approaches to development integrating environmental and social goals. Civil society organizations, particularly NGOs, can serve as alternatives to inadequate or weak democratic institutions, facilitators of more inclusive dialogues, as well as drivers for information dissemination on government activities. With support for constructive dialogue and the creation of spaces for collaboration with national governments and other authorities, NGOs can become key participants in developing, implementing, and monitoring environmental and sustainable development policies and programs.

The prospects for achieving sustainable development and overall environmental quality in EU neighbor countries have suffered as a consequence of climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, land degradation, deforestation, and pollution from residential, industrial and commercial sources. Governments, bound by financial, technical, political, and bureaucratic limitations, find it increasingly difficult to address the variety and complexity of environment and development issues. As climate changes and populations increase, tastes and patterns of consumption shift, and economies grow, environmental governance takes on new urgency, particularly in light of the role of civil society in the recent democratization drives.

Good environmental governance is contingent upon civil society actors cooperating with governments and monitoring government decision-making. With sufficient capacity development and space to act, NGOs can step in to help deliver services and support government policy and management functions. These include taking independent action as well as working collaboratively with government agencies at different levels on policy formation and implementation, conducting research, monitoring environmental quality, participating in environmental education, raising awareness about pressing environmental problems and seeking solutions, and directly managing natural resources – such as protected areas – together with communities and citizen groups. In the absence of other channels, environmental NGOs can represent vulnerable and marginalized populations and serve as a conduit for minority views in policy debate, thereby contributing to a diverse and promising civil society.

While environmental NGOs in both target regions have also made substantial achievements promoting environmental education, raising awareness, and organizing campaigns for nature protection, a capacity gap occurs between the tangible results and lived experience of local environmental actions and rendering these results into knowledge and information that can be readily understood by the public and directly used by policy-makers. These critical external capacity gaps are exacerbated by the internal organizational, financial, and administrative capacity deficiencies that plague the majority of NGOs. A small cadre of experienced NGOs in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa have been internationally and nationally active in environmental governance. However, the vast majority of NGOs in these

regions are deeply rooted in their local and national contexts and tend to work on nature protection and environmental management at the community level. They are generally small organizations with modest funding, minimal staff, and weak institutional capacity, and are often reliant on in-kind contributions, local networks, and volunteers.

4. THE EU-NGOs METHODOLOGY

Rationale and Methodology

UNDP and SGP experience in the two regions has been that NGOs have had success with demonstration projects that produce local benefits and build community capacities for biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable land management, international waters protection, and abatement of persistent organic pollutants, for example. However, they have been less focused on promoting participatory policy-making and influencing decision-making processes. There tends to be a capacity gap between on-the-ground activities and transforming the lessons from good practices into policies and regulatory norms.

With this project, SGP builds upon and leverages its experience in the two regions to target specifically the capacity needs of NGOs to allow them to participate more effectively in environmental management and policy processes and in environmental governance, broadly speaking. The project has been aligned with the European Commission's recognition of the significance of civil society action in environmental protection and resource management, as well as the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) national action plans, which emphasize effective environmental governance and the role of NGOs. By providing targeted grants for training, capacity building, and knowledge exchange, the project builds the internal and external capacities of NGOs in each of the selected countries so that they are able to influence policy-making and to engage more fully in environmental governance at different levels.

The primary target group for EU-NGOs Project support is legally registered NGOs in the selected countries with an environmental mission, environmental track record or a strong interest in environmental policy in relation to their mission. Environmental NGOs with demonstrated capacity needs are the preferred target group, but all NGOs and even

EU-NGOs Local Project Funding and Management: The GEF Small Grants Programme

EU-NGOs activities are delivered through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme (SGP), a grantmaking programme with more 20 years of experience in providing technical support and delivering small grants to community-based organizations for local development and environment projects, which also provides 1:1 co-financing toward project objectives to match the EU-NGOs Project. Following SGP procedures, EU-NGOs grants are screened by the SGP National Coordinators in each country and submitted to country level. These multistakeholder committees, composed of primarily representatives from civil society organizations, along with representatives of government, academia, UNDP, and other donors and stakeholders, undertake grant selection and approval in a decentralized way at the country level. Grants are then awarded directly to the CBOs and local NGOs taking the lead role in planning and implementing local landscape projects. Within each country, the National Coordinator and often Programme Assistant support local grantees in planning and carrying out project activities, measuring progress against objectives and indicators, communicating and sharing experiences with other grantees and stakeholders, and meeting the formal requirements of the grantmaking process and partnership agreement.

community-based organizations would be, in principle, eligible to apply for grants if they are in alignment with EU-NGOs Project objectives. As a vital first step in the local EU-NGOs Project development and partnership process, a proponent NGO expresses interest to build capacities in the context of a concrete initiative to address an identified environmental priority.

Project Selection Process

The project selection process for the EU-NGOs Project is in line with established SGP standards. For the EU-NGOs Project, it was specified that proposals of legally registered, national NGOs in selected countries with an environmental mission and an environmental track record or a strong interest in environmental policy could be considered for EU-NGOs grants. Additional, country-specific selection criteria are in some cases discussed and identified by SGP Country Programmes and their SGP National Steering Committee (NSC).

The full grant proposal is submitted to the NSC for final approval to ensure consistency with national environmental and development priorities and alignment with the concept of environmental governance. The NSC is responsible for the review, selection and approval of these EU-financed projects in concordance with the SGP Operational Guidelines. If approved, the proposed project receives a grant not exceeding USD 50,000 for a maximum project duration of 18 months.

5. CAPACITY OUTCOMES OF THE EU-NGOs PROJECT

In line with UNDP's Capacity Development Approach and the Objectives of the Capacity Development Framework of the GEF and SGP capacity development projects, all EU-NGOs projects must select at least one important environmental priority at the national level and contribute to the development of one or more of the following five Capacity Outcomes:

1. Capacities for Engagement

Enhancing the capacity of stakeholders to engage in national or sub-national policy analysis and dialogue processes, related to environmental governance and management. In particular, facilitating the formation of civil society networks, multistakeholder roundtables and panels that enable civil society to provide inputs to government officials on agenda-setting and policy development processes.

2. Capacities to Generate, Access, and Use Information and Knowledge

Improving and strengthening NGOs' roles in generating awareness of environmental issues, policies and impacts, for example, and disseminating environmental information and knowledge to civil society and government in order to address environmental problems and find adequate solutions.

3. Capacities for Strategy, Policy and Legislation Development

Strengthening the capacity of organizations to participate in the development of policy and legislative frameworks for environmental governance and management. This includes the integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies at the national level and promoting a constructive dialogue among government and civil society actors for participatory environmental policy formulation.

4. Capacities for Management and Implementation

Improving organizational capacity, including skills in project development, resource mobilization, business planning and administrative capacity, to participate in the implementation and management of environmental projects and programmes as well as in policy dialogues and reforms.

5. Capacities to Monitor and Evaluate Environmental Impacts and Trends

Improving organizational capacity to monitor and evaluate environmental problems, inform policy planning and decision-making processes, and advocate policy changes, thereby increasing public sector accountability.

Building Internal and External Capacities of Civil Society Groups

To achieve these Capacity Outcomes and strengthen the role of NGOs in environmental governance, projects can involve various activities specifically designed to contribute to a particular outcome. Grants are used by NGOs to build internal capacities in areas such as leadership preparation, strategic planning, self-evaluation, resource mobilization, and strengthening technical, administrative and financial skills. In order to build external capacities, grants support training in areas that improve advocacy, technical and scientific skills, and networks and alliances so as to participate in policy analysis, dialogues, and monitoring and assessment activities.

In terms of external capacities, the grants support conceptual and practical training in several vital areas related to environmental governance:

- » Participating in environmental decision-making;
- » Advocating for environmental justice through access to law, the courts, and public opinion;
- » Using communications and media campaigns strategically to promote sound environmental governance;
- » Building alliances and networking with civil society organizations nationally and regionally;
- » Collecting, analyzing, and promoting access to environmental and sustainable development information;
- » Conducting policy analysis, participating in policy consultations and policy implementation;
- » Assessing environmental conditions and monitoring compliance with environmental laws and agreements (on the part of government, industry, communities, etc.).

NGOs can use small grants funding to access advisory services, contract national consultants to provide specific capacity building, and/or to support the organization and facilitation of training seminars and exchange workshops.

Through grants, NGOs are able to access training and build their internal capacities in six main areas:

- » Assessment of internal capacities and elaboration of capacity development plans;
- » Strengthening of staff skills (technical, administrative, financial, etc.);
- » Leadership preparation;
- » Guidance on resource mobilization;
- » Performance self-evaluation;
- » Strategic planning.

Potential Activities to Achieve the Capacity Outcomes

The EU-NGOs project portfolio in a country aims to comprise a mix of the most appropriate activities to address local challenges to environmental governance in a holistic manner. Some of these potential activities are outlined in the following table.

Table 1: Potential Activities to Achieve Capacity Outcomes

Capacity Outcome	Exemplary Activities to Achieve Capacity Outcome Strengthening capacities for enhanced:
<p>Outcome 1: Capacities for Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Facilitation of civil society networks and multistakeholder roundtables that enable civil society to provide inputs to government officials on agenda-setting and policy development processes. » Promotion of a governance structure that acknowledges the role of NGOs and other members of civil society and devises formal channels for participation. » Development of multi-stakeholder governance frameworks and participatory planning processes.
<p>Outcome 2: Capacities to Generate, Access, and Use Information and Knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Information dissemination on the environmental consequences of economic activities in order to promote behavioral changes. » Promotion of collection, codification and dissemination of information and knowledge related to main national environmental problems. » Awareness raising on environmental challenges, policies and measures, as well as advocacy to change.
<p>Outcome 3: Capacities for Strategy, Policy and Legislation Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies at the national level. » Identification of specific environmental challenges and concerns, awareness raising, promotion of a constructive dialogue among government and civil society actors regarding policy changes to mitigate these. » Assessment and revision of existing environmental policies at the national level and development of recommendations to strengthen the policy framework to promote sustainable practices. » Development of new policies, strategies and frameworks that are primarily informed by lessons learned from civil society actors.
<p>Outcome 4: Capacities for Management and Implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Participation of NGOs in the policy-making process by advocating policy changes at the national level. » Technical skills in specific environmental concerns, specific leadership and advocacy required to ensure NGO capacity is adequate for environmental governance. » NGO participation in or leadership of policy dialogues and reforms to facilitate exchange and influence government policies.

Capacity Outcome	Exemplary Activities to Achieve Capacity Outcome Strengthening capacities for enhanced:
Outcome 5: Capacities to Monitor and Evaluate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Public sector accountability by building the capacities of NGOs to monitor problems and trends, raise awareness and advocate changes. » NGO contribution to advocacy, communications and outreach, technical/scientific skills, and networks and alliances with other civil society groups. » Organizational, financial, and technical skills and knowledge, and strategic planning capacities within the NGO itself. » Informed NGO participation in environmental governance processes, inter alia, policy analysis, dialogue, and negotiation; research, monitoring and assessment; and coalitions and campaigns.



Knowledge products at the Environmental NGOs Forum 2015, PA EcoContact, EU-NGOs Moldova





PART 2

Strengthening Civil Society Capacities on the Ground

A SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES FROM PARTNER COUNTRIES





1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Environmental concerns

Addressing climate change. Climate change and its effects are among the most serious challenges for environmental governance in Armenia over the next decades. Armenia is already experiencing a number of environmental issues exacerbated by climate change, such as the depletion of vital water catchments and wetlands, overuse of Lake Sevan basin resources, deforestation, land degradation and desertification, loss of habitats and biodiversity, occurrence of natural disasters, and increased vulnerability of agricultural products. A considerable change in Armenia's local climatic conditions is anticipated over the next century, with agricultural losses exceeding 8 percent of Armenian GDP possible by 2100. Unless prompt and effective action is taken to implement large-scale adaptation measures, the national economy as well as the livelihoods of the population will be harmed, with Armenia's poor and rural populations particularly vulnerable.

Teaching environmental stewardship. A sustainable future requires determined and streamlined environmental protection across sectors. This is especially critical for communities depending most directly on their natural environment. To this end, young people need to be educated and galvanized as stewards of change for sustainable development in their communities. To protect Armenia's natural environment—one of the 34 biodiversity hotspots in the world, as determined by the WWF and Conservation International—the next generation of citizens needs to build a consciousness of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Public awareness and the role of civil society in environmental governance

Participation of civil society in environmental governance has been largely ineffective in Armenia to date. While engagement of civil society organizations in advocacy initiatives, particularly in the area of environmental governance, is increasing in Armenia, it is frequently situational. Rather than having a predefined mission and strategic plans, and being proactively involved in policy-making and implementation, CSOs are often formed on an ad hoc basis for practical activities, reacting to acute cases that demand immediate solutions. However, NGOs active in environmental fields are in numerous cases more established than in other sectors.

Reasons for often inadequate civil society response include a low level of awareness of environmental problems or the options to solve them. Insufficient CSO capacity for effective communication and advocacy, the lack of institutional mechanisms for engagement and participation in policy formulation and monitoring of policy implementation, as well as financial constraints are also important factors.³

The net effect is that civil society has been mostly excluded from environmental governance mechanisms such as policy development, drafting legislation, and monitoring compliance by the authorities, and can hence rarely execute its right to participate in designing and implementing solutions to local environmental problems. Civil society has the legal right to participate in public hearings, and their recommendations should be considered and incorporated into final decision-making by the authorities, evoking legal consequences. This would allow CSOs to more effectively play their role as catalysts in developing durable solutions and mobilizing the necessary public involvement in support of managing emerging environmental challenges.

Current environmental policy situation, legislation and standards

Since 2012, the UN “Post Rio+20” process has been the key global process on sustainable development, and environmental management in particular. In Armenia, an Interdepartmental Commission was established in 2013 to support the implementation of Rio+20 recommendations by collaborating with NGOs, the private sector, scientific institutions, local authorities, and communities. The Commission involves 13 nominated NGOs and relevant government agencies. The scope of the Commission’s tasks include sustainable mining activities, nature protection and human health; development of alternative energy; sustainable management of water resources; sustainable waste management; development of organic farming; development of sustainable tourism; sustainable cities/development of green architecture; sustainable management of forests, preservation of biodiversity; implementation of the UN decade on “Education for Sustainable Development;” transformation of MDGs to national SDGs; Sustainable Development indicators and indices; and assistance to the green economy development process through legal and economic instruments.

With respect to civil society participation in environmental decision-making processes, current legislation in Armenia provides a general framework obligating authorities to engage the public. However, as addressed above, this is rarely enforced in practice and an appropriate platform for policy dialogue does not exist. Hence, targeted regulation of public participation in environmental decision-making and legislation development processes will need to be established. Creation of an appropriate legislative framework as well as a platform to encourage an effective dialogue to ensure meaningful public participation is also in line with Armenia’s obligations under the 1998 UN/ECE Aarhus Convention “On access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.”

2. EU-NGOs ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

As described above, civil society organizations often lack the necessary legal knowledge and skills to effectively participate in environmental governance processes. In addition, government institutions, despite being mandated to involve the general public in decision-making, rarely transform civil society recommendations into policies in an adequate manner. Hence, EU-NGO grants have supported initiatives in Armenia strongly focused on civil society empowerment to participate in environmental governance processes. This involved efforts to build institutional capacities of CSOs and NGOs, increase awareness on environmental issues and strengthen their ability to analyze the current legal framework

³ European Commission (EC). 2015. Armenia – EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017.

and draft legislation to inform policy decisions. To empower future generations of environmental stewards promoting sustainable development and environmental health, youth was actively involved and environmental education was promoted on a national scale.

Project Overview and Contribution to Capacity Outcomes

To address the issues outlined above and increase civic participation in environmental governance for generations to come, five local projects were supported through grants to community-based organizations of between USD 23,000 and USD 50,000. The following table outlines these community-led projects as well as their contributions to the Capacity Outcomes defined by the EU-NGOs approach.

Table 2: EU-NGOs Community-Led Projects in Armenia

Project	Grantee	Description
Empowered CSOs for environmental sustainability: promoting environmental governance through empowerment of non-governmental capacity development	“NGO Center” Civil Society Development NGO (NGOC) USD 47,445	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 3, 4, and 5. The project aimed to enhance CSO capacities for stronger engagement in environmental governance processes. The project has the following specific objectives: (1) Empowerment of Armenian environmental civil society organizations towards their strategic, cooperative and advocacy role in environmental decision making; (2) Promotion of dialogue and networking among environmental civil society organizations and stakeholder institutions/sectors; and (3) Promotion of public participation in environmental planning at the local level through development of local environmental action plans (LEAPs).
Enabling dialogue between governmental structures and non-governmental sector within the framework of the “Post Rio+20” process in Armenia	Association for Sustainable Human Development NGO (ASHD) USD 40,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1 and 3. The goal of this project was to create an enabling environment for NGO involvement in the Interdepartmental Commission within the National Council for Sustainable Development. As its main result, the project developed the “Strategy Concept for the implementation of “Rio+20” UN Summit recommendations in the Republic of Armenia.” Its approach was to bring representatives of government, NGOs and local communities to a single discussion and to ensure a comprehensive and fair dialogue between all stakeholders during the decision-making process.

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Capacity building for NGOs for effective participation in environmental decision-making through elaboration of relevant policy tools and awareness-raising</p>	<p>Environmental Public Advocacy Centre (EPAC)</p> <p>USD 39,555</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, and 3.</p> <p>The objective of the project was to facilitate policy dialogue between environmental NGOs and public authorities responsible for environmental decision-making, with the aim to strengthen the “rule of law” principle in environmental governance. Specific objectives of the project were to develop (1) A Guide on public participation in environmental decision-making, as well as to conduct awareness-raising and capacity building trainings for NGOs; (2) A web-platform to facilitate an environmental policy dialogue; and (3) A draft Governmental Decree “On approval of public participation rules for the procedure of elaboration of legal acts related to the environment.”</p>
<p>Churches and CSOs influence decision-making processes on environmental problems in Armenia</p>	<p>Armenian Inter-Church Charitable Roundtable Foundation of the World Council of Churches (ART)</p> <p>USD 23,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2 and 3.</p> <p>The objective of the project was to introduce a model community-based environmental finance mechanism to foster community ownership and commitment in environmental projects. By creating an enabling environment for dialogue between community, regional, and central government authorities on one hand, and civil society on the other hand, the project encouraged civil society to come up with initiatives and suggestions on management, activities, and operations of civil revolving “green” funds at the grassroots level.</p>
<p>Empowering the Environmental Education Network to strengthen environmental governance in Armenia</p>	<p>ATP Charitable Foundation</p> <p>USD 50,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2, 3, and 4.</p> <p>To support the establishment of a forum enabling civic, public and private actors to collaborate, a group of Environmental Education (EE) NGOs and civic initiatives in Armenia have formed the Environmental Education Network (EEN). The aim of the EEN is to develop the capacity of its members to engage in environmental education programs as well as meaningfully participate in environmental education policy discussions. The project increased the awareness of the public on environmental issues through broadcasting of Public Service Announcements on key environmental issues and sustainable behavior. Additionally, an online platform was developed to share information and good practices, and to raise awareness on environmental education.</p>



Workshop on LEAPs development, NGO Center, EU-NGOs Armenia

Impacts and Achievements

Strengthened civil society participation in environmental governance processes. The creation of the online platform www.ecolex.am has brought greater transparency to the process of crafting environmental legislation by enabling the public to provide feedback on government drafts of legislation related to environmental protection and natural resource use. Through this platform, civil society gained access to previously unavailable information and is now able to engage with policy makers and other stakeholders in a publicly open space. In addition, the release of a “Guide to Public in the Process of Elaboration of Draft Legal Acts Related to the Environment” has provided guidance to increase civil society engagement in policy development. Under the same project, a draft Governmental Decree “On Approval of Public Participation Rules for the Procedure of Elaboration of Draft Legal Acts related to the Environment” was submitted to the Armenian government via the Ministry of Nature Protection. If adopted, this decree will serve as a normative basis for public participation in environmental policy development, paving the way for broader and more effective participation in environmental governance.

Improved environmental law enforcement through civil society action. As a result of capacity building initiatives by the NGO Center, Armenian NGOs developed four policy briefs on issues such as Aghstev River pollution. One of these policy recommendations presented to the Permanent Commission on Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment, within the framework of the “CSO Day in the National Assembly,” resulted in increased supervision and better law enforcement to reduce waste disposal in the Aghstev River, as well as a call to implement a waste removal system. A monitoring committee was also established to identify and sanction noncompliance.

Streamlined environmental conservation through the adoption of Local Environmental Action Plans. Local Environmental Action Plans (LEAPs) were developed for the urban communities of Ijevan and Akhtala. These plans, which benefitted from civil society participation and included recommendations by those affected and in a position to shape locally suitable solutions, were adopted by the respective City Councils and currently serve as environmental guidelines and policies for the two communities. The plans allocate among local authorities the responsibility for implementation of and fundraising for solutions to environmental issues. Such plans are an effective tool to mitigate environmental challenges and serve as an important sustainability mechanism.

Access to finance to support local environmental projects through the creation of civil revolving funds. The NGO ART created a participatory consultative mechanism to encourage a dialogue between the local population, CSOs, the church and government authorities in five regions of Armenia on encouraging expanded implementation of environmental projects. Consequently, these parties came up with recommendations on creating civil revolving funds—an innovative financing mechanism in Armenia, which aims to increase communities' access to financing for environmental and climate change initiatives. On the basis of the recommendations and legal framework resulting from these dialogues, three communities have now included the creation of such funds into their four-year development plans, and there are plans to expand the dialogue on these civil funds and widely circulate the recommendations on their creation and operation.

Action to implement “Rio + 20” recommendations and develop national Sustainable Development Goals. Through dialogue and collaboration between civil society and the government, facilitated through the project spearheaded by the NGO ASHD, a paper titled “The Strategy Concept for the implementation of “Rio + 20” UN Summit recommendations in the Republic of Armenia in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development worldwide program” was drafted. The implementation strategy elaborated in the paper, which is currently under final review for approval by the Armenian government, will be a significant contribution to the development of national Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Due to this project, Armenia is among those countries taking serious steps towards the development of national SDGs.

Environmental Education Network (EEN) strengthened and expanded. EEN members include CSOs, research institutions, universities, schools, international organizations and government entities. The project implemented by ATP strengthened the capacities of these groups in the fields of resource mobilization, cooperative strategies, communication and technical environmental topics. The project further facilitated the formalization of this network, as EEN members signed a memorandum of understanding on voluntary cooperation, increasing the number of member organizations from eight to 30. Through this network, the dialogue between civil society organizations and relevant government agencies is considerably strengthened, facilitating effective communication and a common understanding among the member groups. Further, ATP and EEN played a key role in enhancing the competencies of over 376 policy makers, teachers, school administrators, civil society and media representatives in topics such as alternative energy and resource saving, climate change adaptation, forest protection and sustainable forest management, recycling, waste management, ecofriendly agricultural practices, biodiversity, and endangered species. The network has also introduced best international and national practices in environmental education. GIZ, UNICEF, WWF and OSCE support the network, enhancing its sustainability.

Civil society recommendations submitted to reform the national environmental education strategy. As a result of the enhanced capacities developed through the EEN project, EEN members were able to submit recommendations to reform national environmental education. These recommendations are reflected in the draft of the State Program of Education Development for 2016-2025, the main education policy document in the country, which is expected to be approved by the National Parliament in 2016. This State Program recognizes the importance of education to sustainable development by listing environmental education as one of the topics of public education in Armenia. One of the main achievements is the inclusion of extra-curricular environmental education as a strategic approach. This means engaging children in real life experiences to promote environmental sustainability and learn environmentally responsible behavior through hands-on experience.

3. LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

Stronger influence and impact through collective civil society action. To influence changes at the national level, it is important for civil society representatives to communicate consistent and unified recommendations. Additionally, coalitions of CSOs that demonstrate a comprehensive set of knowledge, skills, and capacities, and represent different regions are more likely to have a voice in negotiations and effectively participate in environmental policy development. Systematic, issue-specific meetings between CSOs and other stakeholders, and organizational development training to meet the institutional needs of individual CSOs, are essential to build the necessary skill set and common understanding among CSOs. This approach also fosters networking and partnerships among stakeholders, facilitates knowledge and experience exchange, and often provides an opportunity to apply new skills in practice through joint projects and initiatives.

Networks of stakeholder organizations working towards a common goal are efficient tools to exchange knowledge and promote change. The establishment of EEN as a common platform for environmentally oriented organizations and government entities is key to effective communication, experience sharing and dissemination. It is also an important mechanism to inspire innovation, leverage resources, and avoid duplication. Each member organization has equal opportunities to present and voice their key messages and recommendations, share their practices and learn from others. This EU-NGOs supported project proved that gathering under an umbrella such as the EEN network enhances the credibility and impact of civil society organizations. Prior to this project, each of these member organizations had implemented environmental projects at schools, but without having the capacity to disseminate their experiences to the wider public and communicate with public education authorities. In addition, the launching of EEN led to a comprehensive analysis of the role of K-12 education in promoting sustainable development in Armenia, highlighting the curriculum changes necessary to make schooling more effective in promoting environmental thinking. In order to further enhance the role of civil society in environmental governance, it would be beneficial if EEN became a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development under the Prime Minister's office.

Comprehensive supporting legislation for environmental revolving funds will be key to their use and effectiveness. To achieve the development of a strong and sustainable civil revolving funds mechanism, initiatives promoting a legal framework for civil revolving funds should incorporate a wider circle of interconnected legislative issues. For example, the development and adoption of a law on ecosystem services and a concept on green economy would be very useful. Hence, legislative work in all these areas should be continued, with respective legal commentary. At the same time, it is important to continue awareness-raising around revolving funds and to combine this with creation of demonstration funds.



Awareness-raising during the World Environment Day 2015, EPAC, EU-NGOs Armenia



1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Environmental concerns

Azerbaijan is part of the Caucasus region, which is internationally recognized as one of the 25 most important global biodiversity hotspots. The country's seven major ecosystems include forests, high mountains, dry mountain scrublands, steppe, semi-desert, wetlands, and coastal areas. Of these, semi-desert ecosystems cover 32 percent of the country's surface area and are considered the most fragile ecosystems in Azerbaijan.

Rapid multifaceted economic development over the past century has resulted in increasing pressure on the environment and depletion of natural resources. Poor environmental and natural resource management in the territory of Azerbaijan during the 70-year Soviet rule resulted in deforestation, loss of biodiversity, desertification, waste mismanagement and other negative environmental impacts. During the first years of independence in the 1990s, these environmental failures were further exacerbated by the challenges of the economic transition away from the Soviet system, including failure of the energy markets, unsupervised management practices by rural communities, collapse of irrigation systems and other factors. Combined with the impacts of global climate change, this situation requires immediate responses.

The negative impacts of global climate change have already severely affected Azerbaijan locally. A lengthy drought (2014), prolonged rains and landslides (2010-2012), hail storms and floods (2010-2013), particularly the cases of Kura and Araz river floods (2010), and other natural disasters have caused serious damage to the environment and the population.

Public awareness and the role of civil society in environmental governance

CSOs can play a critical role in raising public awareness of environmental challenges and solutions. The current limited public participation in environmental governance in Azerbaijan is associated with low public awareness and insufficient capacity of CSOs with respect to environmental issues. Lack of knowledge products, coupled with insufficient human resources to produce and disseminate such products, are among the main causes for such a low level of public awareness and participation in environmental governance. Furthermore, there is limited national expertise to develop capacity building programs for local experts.

For example, despite being one of the first national environmental NGOs in Azerbaijan, the Ruzgar Environmental Public Union did not have sufficient expertise to carry out innovative awareness-raising and outreach campaigns on climate change prior to targeted capacity building efforts. The general lack of comprehensive knowledge products on climate change and qualified experts greatly limits active public participation in environmental governance processes and implementation of related initiatives. This is in spite of the fact that climate change mitigation and adaptation has been listed as a priority in national policies.

CSOs also have an important part to play in promoting environmentally conscious day-to-day behavior, which can considerably reduce pollution, waste accumulation, and resource exploitation. Reduced consumption of electricity, for example, through energy-efficient appliances and energy-conserving practices, can substantially decrease energy bills while reducing human impact on the climate and the environment. Awareness and incentive programs such as certification schemes and product standards can help to promote these behavioral changes, and CSO involvement can help broaden the acceptance of such schemes. The “Green Office” Certification Program, for example, is designed to make it easy for businesses and consumers to save money and protect the environment. Despite being promoted by leading companies worldwide, this “Green Office” approach was practically unknown in Azerbaijan prior to the involvement of the EU-NGOs Project.

Current environmental policy situation, legislation and standards

The government of Azerbaijan has enacted several programs to tackle environmental problems using sustainable approaches such as waste water management systems, water conservation programs, emission and pollution control mechanisms for industry and transport, and biodiversity conservation, among others.

Regarding biodiversity protection, the government has developed national strategies, plans and projects addressing the priorities reflected in the National Biodiversity Action Plan and Strategy (NBSAP), which was prepared with the support of UNDP-GEF and adopted in 2006. The second National Strategy on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (2017-2020) was decreed in October 2016. It has also undertaken measures to ensure effective functioning of the state institutions responsible for environmental policies. The laws on Environmental Expertise and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are examples of this. In addition, “Azerbaijan 2020: A look into the Future,” a strategy document adopted by the President in December 2012, aims at establishing new cross-sectoral strategies and adopting relevant legislation, including the improvement of environmental governance and protection. This has allowed environmental protection to be institutionalized and incorporated into the work plans of state agencies.

At the global level, Azerbaijan has also joined major international environmental conventions, including on Climate Change, on Biodiversity, on Combating Desertification, on Ozone Layer Protection, and in 2000 ratified the Aarhus Convention, which promotes public participation in environmental issues. This created a legal basis for public participation in environmental governance, which was further solidified by national programs on poverty reduction and sustainable development at the beginning of the 2000s. In practice, however, the challenges still remain in engaging civil society in environmental governance and the implementation of national policies. The establishment of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources (MENR) in 2001 and the subsequent institutionalization of the NGO Council (comprised of CSOs) bolstered public participation opportunities. Nevertheless, lack of institutional practices and expertise in this area and gaps in local capacity continue to prove challenging.



Unsustainable use of pasture land causes erosion, EU-NGOs Azerbaijan

2. EU-NGOs ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

The portfolio of EU-NGOs projects in Azerbaijan supported civil society organizations promoting environmental awareness, generating relevant environmental information, training other civil society organizations to engage with government and participate in policy development, and supporting the implementation of environmental policies and standards. Thematically, supported NGOs focused on agrobiodiversity management and conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as culturing environmental behavior at the workplace through the “Green Office” Certification Program.

Project overview and contribution to capacity outcomes

To increase civil society participation in environmental governance and tackle environmental concerns such as biodiversity loss, climate change and wasteful resource consumption, four local projects were supported through grants of between USD 45,400 and USD 50,000 to community-based organizations. As Azerbaijan does not belong to the portfolio of SGP partner countries, these activities were not delivered through SGP. Instead, the UNDP CO in Baku subcontracted the NGOs and other contractors to carry out the activities outlined in the original proposals submitted by the NGOs and selected by the National Steering Committee. The following table outlines these community-led projects.

Table 3: EU-NGOs Community-Led Projects in Azerbaijan

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Strengthening participation in environmental policy making by enhancing the capacity of NGOs</p>	<p>Eco Renaissance Public Union (PU) USD 49,364</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2 and 3. The main objective of the project was to strengthen the capacities of Eco Renaissance in agrobiodiversity conservation and management, to stimulate the active engagement of academia, government and civil society institutions in its conservation and to run a national advocacy campaign. The project aimed to facilitate regional partnerships on biodiversity conservation through multi-stakeholder meetings, focus group discussions, TV debates and a national conference. To increase public access to legislative and knowledge products on biodiversity, the project established a digital database. Finally, it developed a set of recommendations to support the drafting process of the law on “Environmental Expertise” (which stipulates that all new projects must evaluate potential environmental impacts and contain respective mitigation actions), and the law on regulating “GMOs.”</p>
<p>Increasing the capacity of Ruzgar Environmental Public Union in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation aimed at enhanced participation in environmental policy formulation and implementation</p>	<p>Ruzgar Environmental Public Union (EPU) USD 50,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2 and 4. The purpose of this project was to increase Ruzgar’s capacity in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation, thereby enhancing its role in environmental governance in Azerbaijan. It aimed to create knowledge products and resources addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation to increase awareness and to ensure that adequate capacities are in place nationally for the efficient use of such climate change-related knowledge. Additionally, it aimed to enhance Ruzgar’s profile in national policy reviews and discussions on climate change, environmental governance and management, ideally leading to the establishment of an NGO coalition around Ruzgar on climate change-related issues.</p>

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Increasing the capacity of Ruzgar Environmental Public Union in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation aimed at enhanced participation in environmental policy formulation and implementation</p>	<p>Ruzgar Environmental Public Union (EPU) USD 50,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2 and 4.</p> <p>The purpose of this project was to increase Ruzgar’s capacity in the field of climate change mitigation and adaptation, thereby enhancing its role in environmental governance in Azerbaijan. It aimed to create knowledge products and resources addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation to increase awareness and to ensure that adequate capacities are in place nationally for the efficient use of such climate change-related knowledge. Additionally, it aimed to enhance Ruzgar’s profile in national policy reviews and discussions on climate change, environmental governance and management, ideally leading to the establishment of an NGO coalition around Ruzgar on climate change-related issues.</p>
<p>Creation of the capacities to implement the “Green Office” Certification System in Azerbaijan</p>	<p>Ireli Public Union USD 45,378</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2 and 5.</p> <p>This project aimed to promote the implementation of the “Green Office” Certification system in Azerbaijan to enhance the social corporate responsibility of businesses with respect to the environment and promote sustainable resource utilization in the private sector, reducing resource exploitation, pollution and the carbon footprint of the business community. “Green office” criteria were developed based on international standards and adapted to local conditions and feasibilities. Moreover, this certification system and its criteria will help to reduce environmental impacts of various private sector activities, including different office operations, and will increase environmental monitoring and evaluation capacities of the Ireli Public Union, other NGOs, government institutions, as well as businesses themselves.</p>
<p>Increasing the potential of NGOs in environmental governance and management processes in Azerbaijan</p>	<p>Environmental Law Center Ecolex USD 50,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2 and 3.</p> <p>The objective of this project was to increase Ecolex’ capacities and those of partner NGOs in environmental governance and management, and to participate in environmental policy and decision-making in Azerbaijan. To achieve this, project activities were designed to: (A) increase access and capacities to use environmental information; (B) increase capacities in developing strategies and drafting environmental laws; (C) enable Ecolex to become a valuable partner for state agencies in charge of environment; (D) facilitate constructive working relations with relevant government agencies; (E) play a bridging role between the general public and decision-makers through improved advocacy skills; (F) and represent interests of the general public through participation in government bodies preparing and implementing policies.</p>



Training on agro-biodiversity and GMOs, Eco Renaissance, EU-NGOs Azerbaijan

Impacts and Achievements

While the support of EU-NGOs Project has considerably increased the internal capacities of its partner NGOs in Azerbaijan, it has also generally strengthened environmental governance capacities throughout the country and across a large number of stakeholders in the following ways:

Increased access to agrobiodiversity and climate change information. Eco Renaissance, in collaboration with trained experts, developed a comprehensive report on agrobiodiversity, containing analyses on current volumes and practices, challenges, future risks, and recommendations for sustainable practices and conservation. The report was disseminated at the national conference organized by the project and is available to the general public. It is already being used by universities and environmental NGOs for education, training and design of agrobiodiversity initiatives. Additionally, the project team designed the digital database www.ekolojirenesans.org, which contains the latest information on agrobiodiversity in the country, data and visual information on SPAs, environmental articles, and project results. By collecting and centralizing available data both at national and global levels, the database has become a comprehensive information portal on agrobiodiversity issues in the Azerbaijani language, encouraging students and young researchers to feature articles on its blog. Similarly, Ruzgar has coordinated the development of publications and training materials on climate change issues and will continue to distribute these knowledge products to relevant organizations, public libraries, academic and Aarhus centers, and will continue to make them available through its website, which will further support the training of national experts.



Stronger civil society participation in policy-making and strengthened partnerships. EU-NGOs-supported projects enabled environmental NGOs to strengthen their collaboration as well as their relations to relevant government bodies such as the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MENR), opening opportunities for joint initiatives.

Eco Renaissance, for example, was able to submit recommendations to the Parliament for amendments to the law on “Conservation of the genetic reserves and sustainable use of the plants” that prohibit the production, circulation, industrialization, and import of genetically modified plants or agricultural plant materials created by modern biotechnological and genetic engineering methods. Eco Renaissance also submitted amendments to laws on “Organic agriculture,” “Seed-farming,” “Tea-growing” and “Grain,” as well as recommendations on how to monitor and enforce these regulations. Meanwhile, the Ecolex Environmental Law Center actively participated in discussions and the preparation of drafts of several significant plans and laws, including the “Strategy and Action Plan on Economic Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2016-2020,” the laws on “Environmental Impact Assessment” and “Public Monitoring,” and regulations on “Model rules on the use of Forests,” as well as the “National Blue Flag” ecolabel. In addition, Ecolex’s leadership was fundamental in the creation of a coalition of NGOs to jointly advocate public interests before government bodies.

Support for “Green Office” Certification in Azerbaijan. The Public Union Ireli facilitated the development of training and information materials on the “Green Office” Certification system in Azeri, combining national and international expertise, and organized the training of over 200 people across the country through a “train-the-trainers” approach. Monitoring and evaluation tools developed and provided through this project include the “Green Office” website at ireli.az, and the “Green Office” guidebook, which provides an overview of resource use in offices and spells out resource-saving options for typical office operations such as lighting, office equipment, paper products, heating and cooling, water, and parking, among others. These information blocks have had a great impact on the dissemination and management of environmental information within the country. While these trainings and knowledge products successfully built capacities in the “Green Office” Certification system, encouraging stakeholders to participate in the system, they also increased general public awareness on environmental issues—a critical foundation for environmentally sustainable behavior. Environmental knowledge and information was disseminated to around 100,000 people through social networks, news portals, TV and other media. At the same time, government officials were involved in a special „green standard“ multiplayer group, which created an opportunity for delivering relevant information to the appropriate ministries.

3. LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

Active use of social networks and communication platforms is key to increase awareness among the predominantly young population in Azerbaijan. Considering that the majority of the population in the country is under the age of 30, the widespread use of social networks, and the high connectivity through smart phones and tablets, project outreach in knowledge sharing and communications was most effective and affordable through social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Overall, 31 participants, including representatives of NGOs and their experts, as well as the MENR division and department heads, participated in the training on “Increasing potential of environmental information-sharing by using social networks” facilitated by Ecolex in February 2016. Fifteen training videos were prepared and posted on the “Public Participation” YouTube page hosted by Ecolex. These training materials address general principles and methods of information generation and access, as well as methods for generating information on specific environmental problems caused by different sectors of the economy (e.g. forest, agriculture, tourism, urban pollution, etc.).

A solid legislative basis for civil society participation and enabling frameworks is necessary for active civil engagement in environmental governance. Capacity building initiatives alone are not sufficient for the active participation of NGOs in environmental management, but should be associated with a solid legislative basis. For example, the absence of an enacted Law on Environmental Impact Assessment prevents meaningful NGO participation in related environmental

decision-making. Additionally, the establishment of a centralized environmental assessment and monitoring lab for national NGOs can contribute to further enhancing institutional capacities of civil society organizations in environmental governance, risk assessments, project implementation, and monitoring, among others.

Continued collaboration between environmental NGOs and cooperation with decision-makers will be key to sustaining project impacts. During the implementation of these four EU-NGOs supported projects, close cooperation was established with the central environmental decision-maker in Azerbaijan, the MENR, including its local and regional branches. This played a key role in the success of the projects. The dialogue and collaboration that has resulted will ensure that project outcomes are sustained and will provide a platform for successful partnerships in the future. Ecolex, Eco Renaissance and Ruzgar are actively pursuing continued cooperation. For example, they recently jointly contributed to the environmental education and policy-making components for the project “Reinforcing the environmental governance in Goy-Gol National Park,” one of the national parks recently opened to the public after many years of closure.

Further training will be necessary to improve public and civil capacities for effective participation in environmental governance. During the EU-NGO-supported projects, deficiencies in local capacities to engage with government authorities were revealed during multistakeholder workshops. Addressing these will require further training in the future. Areas of weak civil capacity include implementation of regulations, preparation of local environmental plans, and cooperation with authorities at the local level. The multistakeholder workshops also highlighted the need for environmental NGOs to receive further thematic trainings on environmental issues and potential solutions. It would also be useful to focus in the future on public oversight of the environment to increase the effectiveness of environmental governance. There is also a need to finance projects on the re-establishment and development of the Aarhus public environmental information centers in Azerbaijan.

Development of Public Councils within other Ministries can help to integrate environmental governance into other government and economic sectors. While the Public Council representing civil society was established at the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, the MENR is not the only entity or stakeholder in the field of environmental protection; there are many other relevant ministries and state agencies that should be included in discussions and work plans. Public councils have proven to be effective ways to share information about the environment with the public and engage civil society in decision-making processes.



Participants of sustainable urban planning training, Ecolex, EU-NGOs Azerbaijan



EGYPT

1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Environmental concerns

Egypt is facing severe environmental challenges, particularly with respect to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation, soil depletion, and air pollution. Moreover, studies have found that if no action is taken, climate change will reduce Egypt's GDP significantly in the long term.

Decades of increased population growth, intense urbanization and virtually unregulated industrial pollution have placed significant pressure on the Egyptian environment. Heavy metals in industrial waste and emissions are contaminating air and water resources, increasing a variety of health risks for Egyptians. The causes of these environmental problems are complex, and relate, in large part, to the decisions made by policy makers to favor industrialization for rapid economic growth, while ignoring the environmental consequences.

Clean water has become the core environmental challenge in Egypt. Protecting and cleaning water sources, as well as adopting an integrated approach to water resource management, have the potential to support the achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including not only those related to health, but also to poverty and hunger eradication, education, women's empowerment, and environmental sustainability. Transforming the energy sector through a substantially increased use of renewable energy will also be key to sustainable human and economic development going forward.

Public awareness and the role of civil society in environmental governance

The response of the Egyptian Government to local environmental challenges faces some barriers at the policy, strategy and interventions levels. One reason is the weak role of civil society (both activists and CSOs) in demanding more effective government measures, due to weak institutional capacities, lack of understanding of environmental governance processes and approaches to engagement, as well as insufficient financial capacities. There is also a lack of public awareness of sustainable development and climate change issues, as well as of the social accountability of public services.

Moreover, environmental issues in Egypt generally rank relatively low in terms of public attention. The government and the public are usually more concerned with socioeconomic issues such as education, health, and unemployment, with environmental problems a low priority. Although the number of NGOs in Egypt has been growing since the Egyptian revolution, only a small number of them possess in-depth knowledge of environmental issues and legislation. The issue of waste is the environmental challenge with the highest public recognition, with waste contaminating waterways and soil, and thereby impacting agriculture and health. However, the public remains unconcerned with many other serious environmental threats. CSOs have an important role to play in reaching out to communities to enhance their participation in formulating environmental policies and managing natural resources. A more comprehensive environmental understanding by the public will be critical to enforcing responsibility and accountability towards the environment.

However, there is a large information and communication gap between providers of public services, such as potable water and waste removal, and consumers, with a critical need for an effective mechanism to close this gap. Additionally, most NGOs and CSOs need stronger capacities to network, drive initiatives, engage in longer-term development projects, mobilize community members such as youth groups for participatory activities, and lead advocacy campaigns to effectively change the status quo. NGOs need to increasingly work in consultation with communities regarding their needs to bring public voices and recommendations more successfully onto the public policy level. Finally, the social accountability concept and approaches that bring together community members, service providers, and local governments to identify service provision challenges, and to jointly develop solutions in an ongoing process of improvement are new to local NGOs in Egypt.

Given these difficulties, a critical aspect of promoting good environmental governance is institutional and environmental capacity building for CSOs and NGOs, to foster their roles in environmental governance processes and enable public participation in policy formulation and implementation. There is an equally great need for capacity building in the Ministry of Environment, which plays a key role on the government side, with responsibility for the management of natural resources, and a mandate to facilitate their sustainable use and availability for future generations. Moreover, effective partnerships between governmental authorities and CSOs are needed to expand accessibility of environmental services at the community level.⁴

Current environmental policy situation, legislation and standards

Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) is critical to addressing many of the water-related issues in Egypt. One of the most important principles of this approach, as set forth at the UN Conference on Water and Management held in Dublin in 1992, is: "Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners, and policy-makers at all levels." The application of IWRM requires improved water governance and increased coordination and collaboration among water sector stakeholders, including water users. One of the ways that this is expressed in Egypt is through Water User Associations (WUAs). These associations are formed from small farmers and water users in rural areas and are registered with the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources. Their function is to monitor and ensure equitable distribution of irrigation water, and to prevent the pollution of water canals with wastes.

With its resources, location and population, Egypt has the potential to master the transformation to a "Green Economy," which could help to simultaneously tackle environmental and socioeconomic challenges in the country in an integrated approach. To this effect, the government has recently released its "National Green Economy Strategy," which includes its aspirations on "Green Energy." However, there is still a large gap between Egypt's renewable energy (RE) potential

⁴ United Nations Development Programme. 2008. *The Egypt Human Development Report 2008 – Egypt's Social Contract: The Role of Civil Society*. Human Development Project. UNDP, Egypt.



Participatory planning workshop, FDPD, EU-NGOs Egypt

and adequate policies, standards and infrastructure to promote RE development and consumption. An official system for quantifying and pricing RE is not yet in place and the government has not defined authorities responsible for issuing permissions and licenses for the production, distribution and use of RE. There is also a lack of integration between the sources of renewable energy and the country's electricity network, and regulations on RE equipment to ensure safety and adequacy do not exist. There is a need to establish a „Renewable Energy Standardization Agency,“ and to develop a manual for renewable energy production to enable new industrial projects to use renewable energy.

2. EU-NGOs ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

With the large and mainly untapped renewable energy potential in the industrial and domestic sectors, as well as the severe water pollution and scarcity problem in Egypt, the EU-NGOs Project portfolio focused primarily on civil society empowerment, stakeholder dialogue, and civic participation in policy formulation and implementation in these two sectors. Acknowledging the critical role of youth in driving water and RE initiatives, mobilizing communities, and influencing public opinions and policies in the future, youth groups were actively engaged in project implementation. Moreover, while women are often excluded from community initiatives due to cultural practices, all EU-NGOs projects promoted increased engagement of women in environmental governance.

Project Overview and Contribution to Capacity Outcomes

Five local projects were supported through grants to community-based organizations of between USD 35,000 and USD 44,000. The following table outlines these community-led projects as well as their contributions to the Capacity Outcomes defined by the EU-NGOs approach.

Table 4: EU-NGOs Community-Led Projects in Egypt

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Promoting environmental governance for Integrated Water Resources Management in Fayoum</p>	<p>Forum of Dialogue and Partnership for Development (FDPD) USD 43,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, and 5. The project objective was to promote good water governance by enhancing stakeholder participation in the formulation, monitoring and implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the Fayoum Governorate. The project aimed to: create and maintain good relations with the Water Orientation Section in the Fayoum Irrigation Department (FID), which assists in the formation, training and support of Water User Associations (WUAs); raise the capacities of the Water Orientation team in terms of training and technical assistance; raise awareness of good governance concepts among the six local WUAs; build capacities of WUAs to formulate and analyze local water policies; build capacities of WUA partners to monitor the implementation of water policies and their socioeconomic impacts; develop a direct dialogue mechanism between WUAs and the Irrigation Department to exchange information; and validate a “Code of Conduct for WUAs,” fostering IWRM governance methodologies.</p>
<p>Environmental governance “Knowledge Multipliers”</p>	<p>Egyptian NGO Support Center (ENGOSC) USD 43,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 3, and 5. The project aimed to establish and build the capacities of a network of NGOs to promote and advocate for effective environmental governance. This involved awareness raising and advocacy initiatives that enabled citizens and CSOs to practice social accountability in Alexandria Governorate, as well as an advocacy campaign at the national level demanding a tangible increase in the use of renewable energy (particularly solar). Project activities included establishing efficient systems for monitoring and evaluation, information management and communication to adequately document, manage and disseminate information about pollution hazards, environmental protection, renewable energy, environmental governance, and Social Accountability.</p>

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Supporting participation and accountability of CSOs to manage environment services</p>	<p>Youth Association for Development and Environment (YADE)</p> <p>USD 35,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1 and 3.</p> <p>The specific objective of this project was to build the capacity of local actors (CSOs, and youth groups) to use social accountability to address social and economic challenges and facilitate policy dialogue and information sharing on renewable energy issues. YADE combined its experience with environment and civil society strengthening with the experience of four intermediate organizations (IOs) in advocacy and implementing renewable energy projects. YADE led on social accountability activities and the IOs led on community mobilization and youth engagement efforts in eight communities in the governorates of Cairo, Assyout, Beni Sueif, and Alexandria.</p>
<p>Partners in responsibility</p>	<p>Hawaa Future Society</p> <p>USD 35,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 4, and 5.</p> <p>This project aimed to increase social responsibility in the public sector as well as among individuals in the governorates of Cairo, Giza, Sohag, and Qena. Specifically, it aimed to build NGO capacities to participate in environmental policy- and decision-making, management of natural resources, and strategy development regarding renewable energy use. It further aimed to enable them to increase participation in environmental governance and build their monitoring and evaluation capacities, becoming competent counterparts to government institutions and further promoting participation and collaboration of all stakeholders.</p>
<p>Mainstreaming sustainable development elements in national and local strategies</p>	<p>Al Thanaa Association for Community Development and Environment Protection</p> <p>USD 44,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1 and 2.</p> <p>The objectives of this project were to (1) strengthen the capacities of NGOs to increase their level of engagement in national and subnational policy analysis and dialogue processes related to environmental governance and management through consultations, dialogues and expert panels, and to (2) strengthen the role of civil society organizations in increasing awareness and disseminating environmental information and knowledge through targeted knowledge management activities. This entailed the development of an interactive website and information dissemination through social media platforms, as well as establishment of local coordination committees in each governorate.</p>



Strengthening the use of social accountability tools, YADE, EU-NGOs Egypt

Impacts and Achievements

Stronger stakeholder collaboration, networks and information exchange on environmental governance issues. The project implemented by ENGOSC, in collaboration with the El Horrya Association and the Friends of the Environment Association, has created a network of NGOs, government institutions and associations advocating for participatory environmental governance and increased renewable energy use to reduce environmental pollution and global warming. More than 25,000 citizens, primarily youth, representatives of government institutions and judiciary and parliament members, have gained access to information about concepts and tools pertaining to environmental governance, renewable energy and social accountability. In addition, 15 members from ENGOSC and the two partner NGOs were trained as trainers in documentation, information management and communication to become “Knowledge Multipliers” for renewable energy and social accountability.

Strengthened civil society capacity for environmental advocacy and monitoring. The project implemented by ENGOSC developed institutional capacities of twelve Egyptian NGOs, eight education institutes, nine companies, and four government bodies, which together have established an “NGO-Network for Promoting Effective Environmental Governance.” The Network carries out awareness raising and advocacy campaigns to build a strong constituency (i.e. a critical mass of issue-aware citizens and CSOs) that can 1) influence the Egyptian legislators, judiciary and government (especially the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs and the Interior Ministry), to adopt more effective policies and take more rigorous measures protecting the environment and promoting renewable energy; and 2) change public opinion on fossil energy and the lack of renewable energy use (e.g. biogas and solar energy). In response to this project, the Alexandria governor established an official Environment Control Unit, in which all stakeholders participate to regularly monitor and evaluate environmental hazards and renewable energy use.

The project led by Hawaa Future Society similarly strengthened public and NGO capacities for engaging in environmental governance, in particular by publishing a training manual for capacity building in monitoring and evaluation, as well as project management and implementation. Using this, the project successfully trained 120 individuals from 40 participating organizations in these skills and conducted a “training-of-trainers” (TOT) for 40 additional individuals. To promote stronger stakeholder collaboration, the project established a network including CSOs in Greater Cairo and Upper Egypt, the General Federal Union of Associations, Directorates of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Environment and its offices in the target areas. To further increase awareness, the project implemented awareness campaigns in the target areas and distributed 3,000 posters and 10,000 flyers promoting the importance of environmental governance.

Successful advocacy campaigns for biogas and biofuels. The ENGOSC successfully led an advocacy campaign in collaboration with the Sun Clean Company (a renewable energy company) to convince the Ministry of Local Development to issue an order to finance home biogas units, as well as another order determining standards for home biogas units. Additionally, the Friends of the Environment Association (FEA), in coordination with the Governorate of Alexandria and the National Company for Potable Water and Sewage (NCPWS), conducted an advocacy campaign to promote the model of planting biofuel trees (Jatropha) on the treated water of sewage treatment stations. Consequently, a Jatropha demonstration field was planted by the FEA, and this model will be replicated at other sites in the future.

Improved collaboration and policy dialogue on water management between government and user groups. The FDPD-led project raised the capacities of 21 coordinators of the Water Management Department as well as 18 members of Water User Associations (WUAs) in Fayoum in terms of good governance concepts, mapping and monitoring environmental challenges related to water, and multistakeholder dialogue and communication tools. The project also facilitated a direct dialogue mechanism—through regular meetings as well as social media—among these stakeholders, resulting in a stronger interest in solving environmental issues associated with water management. In collaboration with the Ministry of Irrigation, the WUAs and the Water Management Department have elaborated a one-year action plan and a 5-year strategic plan on how to strengthen the WUAs’ role in managing water resources in the Fayoum Governorate and foster their relationship with the Ministry of Irrigation. Because the project employed a “training-of-trainers” (TOT) approach, and developed a detailed training manual, a larger capacity-building impact is expected beyond the Fayoum Governorate. In addition, the project drafted a “Code of Conduct for IWRM Governance Action,” including IWRM governance policies and the role of WUAs, which should allow the project to be replicated more easily in other areas.

Strengthened capacities of Egyptian youth to promote social accountability among public and private actors. The project led by YADE improved the capacities of youth volunteers working with twelve CSOs to use social accountability tools such as Community Score Cards to help communities improve their access to environmental services and influence local and national policies. As part of the project, youth groups organized community mobilization activities to identify issues that prevent reliable access to energy services. They also conducted mapping assessments to identify resources to address these challenges. Based on these assessments, CBOs will develop participatory plans with communities and policy makers to define sustainable solutions. Twenty-four youths from the twelve targeted NGOs presented environmental issues to the parliament bodies in their governorates during the course of the project, and policy recommendations produced by the project CBOs have been used in roundtable discussions and meetings with policy makers at the local and national level.

3. LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

Providing tools and training to encourage learning-by-doing often improves commitment and results. Giving targeted NGOs maximum responsibility for implementation of all project activities from the beginning can substantially increase the rate of improvement of their skills and their ability to develop strategic plans for their initiatives. Technical training at the beginning of the project in strategic planning and how to mobilize community interest can successfully kick off this learning-by-doing approach. Additionally, encouraging the formation of small networks of NGOs increases their outreach capacity and fosters knowledge exchange, enabling them to achieve greater civil society and community participation, and to participate in the development of environmental legislation more effectively.

Private sector involvement is critical to increasing national production and consumption of renewable energy (RE). The involvement of the private sector, especially new and renewable energy companies, can provide the missing technical information for environmental organizations aiming to improve community perceptions of RE technologies, as well as RE policy frameworks. More studies and research—in collaboration with the private sector—will be needed to develop recommendations for RE solutions in different geographic areas, including RE sources and appropriate technologies. Furthermore, access to RE financing needs to be created, both for individuals as well as for companies, and technicians need to be trained in installation and maintenance of RE infrastructure. Demonstration projects and solar-powered public facilities could further spur public interest and trust in such technologies.

Multistakeholder partnerships and dialogue platforms are key to improving environmental governance in the long term. Networking and dialogue are powerful tools to exchange knowledge and explore synergies, as well as to strengthen the potential of environmental NGOs to influence policy-making at the national, regional and local levels. At the same time, long-term multistakeholder partnerships and platforms (involving, for example, government authorities, CSOs, private sector actors, and education and research institutions) are necessary to bring different opinions, expertise and needs from different sectors to the table to develop environmental policies and strategies. These are also essential to create the kind of consensus among stakeholders necessary to avoid future opposition. Designated committees, with members fulfilling distinct functions such as strategic planning and coordination, outreach, networking and communication, monitoring and evaluation, can help to facilitate long-term commitment and collaboration.



Increasing NGO engagement in policy dialogues, Al Thanaa, EU-NGOs Egypt



GEORGIA

1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Environmental concerns

Georgia is facing severe environmental challenges, particularly with respect to unsafe water, inadequate number of environmental issues are currently impacting the livelihoods of communities in Georgia and will continue to become more severe without appropriate measures. These include:

Degradation of forests. Poor forestland governance is a serious concern in Georgia, where forests cover about 40 percent of the land area. The quality of forestland governance is an important determinant of the number and scale of environmental problems. Ecosystem services, such as the provision of fuel wood, timber and non-timber products, and drinking water, as well as the prevention of erosion, floods and landslides, are of high importance for a significant portion of the population.

Overexploitation of timber resources, uncontrolled pasturing, and development of infrastructure projects in vital ecosystems—including protected areas—are among the results of bad forest governance. One of the factors behind poor forest management is the absence of a forest categorization (zoning) system based on modern principles of sustainable management and an ecosystem approach—a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources based on ecosystem science.

Growing energy demand. Demand for conventional energy resources, such as wood, is increasing. This is particularly true in rural areas, where economic activity and incomes are low, and the local population is forced to rely on the consumption of firewood from nearby forests because they are unable to afford more expensive fuels such as gas and oil. Exacerbating the problem is the fact that local authorities responsible for regional development often lack sufficient policy knowledge and technological know-how about sound and sustainable energy development. Although Georgia is rich in renewable energy resources, less than 1 percent of these resources are currently used.

Improper waste management. The bulk of the waste generated in Georgia is solid household waste. While waste collection and disposal is more or less well-organized in major cities and municipal centers, it is practically absent or poorly organized in rural areas and small towns. Therefore, much of the rural population disposes of its waste in nearby



Journalists interviewing stakeholders in Bolnisi, Green Alternative, EU-NGOs Georgia

canals, gorges and riverbanks. The low level of community awareness and participation in waste management planning, as well as the absence of waste collection fees in local municipalities, further add to such poor practices, leading to hygiene issues as well as environmental deterioration in these areas. Additionally, many existing controlled waste disposal sites/landfills do not meet minimum sanitary and environmental standards, and constitute serious sources of pollution

Public awareness and the role of civil society in environmental governance

Several studies related to forest legislation and forest management in Georgia have already been conducted, including those by Green Alternative. Yet, there has not been any analysis of the complex issues of forestland governance. This has hampered the ability of local civil society groups and NGOs to advocate and participate in forest-related decision-making processes.

Having ratified the Aarhus Convention, Georgia has committed to ensuring access to information and the right to participate in decision-making processes, as well as the right to access the court, through its Constitution and Administrative Code. However, actual implementation of the Aarhus Convention is still insufficient, especially on the regional level. Among the reasons for this are legislative and administrative barriers, low capacity of NGOs and CSOs (especially outside of the capital city), as well as low motivation of local government representatives, who are responsible for ensuring dissemination of public information and ensuring public involvement in decision-making processes. Although a number of successful capacity-building initiatives for NGOs, government officials and other stakeholders have already been implemented, these barriers are still prevalent, particularly for newly established NGOs and CSOs. Additionally, government representatives, especially on the local and regional level, are often not aware of their obligations to provide access to information and involve civil society in decisions, and often show little interest in changing this.

Insufficient state involvement is one of the main causes of the information deficit in different regions of Georgia. Without a state strategy supporting strong environmental governance and expressing readiness to stimulate these processes with joint efforts of different players, little change on regional and local levels is likely. The need for local and regional decision makers to start understanding the links between environmental governance and socio-economic benefits is urgent. Yet, regional municipalities lack relevant experience, particularly since environmental governance is something rather new for many local decision-makers. Despite these awareness and capacity shortcomings, local and regional authorities increasingly welcome new ideas and proposals in support of their communities and acknowledge civil society's desire to strengthen communication between different stakeholders.

Current environmental policy situation, legislation and standards

While the Government of Georgia has made progress in improving national environmental policy, the country still faces a number of obstacles to sustainable utilization of natural resources, as mentioned above. Civil society engagement in the development of relevant legislation and standards will be key to the effectiveness of such policy measures in the long-term, and will contribute to a strengthened awareness of sustainability within the different sectors and society groups.

Specific renewable energy (RE) legislation is still not in place in Georgia. Electricity sector legislation partly addresses the grid-connected electricity from renewable energy sources such as hydropower and wind power, but other types of renewable energy are not yet covered by legislative acts. There is also no clear and consistent definition of Renewable Energy Sources (RES) that can be uniformly used across Georgia's legislation. Moreover, there is no designated authority with an exclusive mandate to develop renewable energy in the country.

The absence of an effective integrated waste management system, including a proper waste registration and management planning system as well as an effective system for the collection, transportation and disposal of waste, is also one of the priority issues in Georgia outlined in various national assessments, e.g. the National Report on the State of the Environment of Georgia, the Environmental Performance Review EPR and major policy documents such as the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP).

2. EU-NGOs ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

The EU-NGOs project portfolio in Georgia aimed to cover diverse initiatives addressing the previously outlined environmental issues by increasing civil society participation in finding solutions and developing appropriate environmental policies. Some projects particularly involved youth and women, as they are some of the key stakeholder groups both affected by these environmental challenges as well as playing critical roles in their mitigation.

Project Overview and Contribution to Capacity Outcomes

Four local projects were supported through grants to community-based organizations of between USD 27,800 and USD 49,920. The following table outlines these community-led projects as well as their contributions to the Capacity Outcomes defined by the EU-NGOs approach.

Table 5: EU-NGOs Community-Led Projects in Georgia

Project	Grantee	Description
Improving forestland governance to foster sustainable development in Georgia	Green Alternative USD 44,089	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, and 3. Recognizing the importance of sustainable forest management in the protection of biodiversity and human well-being in Georgia, the primary objective of this EU-NGOs-supported project was the improvement of forestland governance. Specific objectives of the project were to: (1) Contribute to elaboration of effective mechanisms of forestland governance; (2) Promote dialogue in policy planning and implementation among civil society groups, public authorities and other stakeholder groups; (3) Increase effectiveness of the advocacy efforts of civil society groups and other local stakeholders; and (4) Improve knowledge of civil society groups and other local stakeholders about sustainable forestland governance and its role in biodiversity/forest conservation.
Active civil sector for better implementation of the Aarhus Convention in Georgia	Georgia International Development Agency (GIDA) USD 30,880	Project contributes to Capacity Outcome 3. This project aimed to improve the legislative base for implementing the Aarhus Convention in Georgia through education of local officials, and capacity building and increased involvement of NGOs/CSOs in the implementation process. Project activities focused on the mobilization of local NGOs/CSOs in roundtable discussions with local government officials to identify existing barriers to Aarhus Convention implementation and elaborate solid policy recommendations for overcoming these barriers.
Building capacities of government and civil society actors through promotion of public dialogue enhancing influence on the elaboration of new energy policy, focusing on sustainable energy alternatives	Environment Protection and Sustainable Development Association "Green Future" USD 27,800	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2, 3, and 4. The objectives of this project were: (1) Assess existing environmental policy at the national level and develop recommendations to strengthen the policy framework to promote the use of renewable energy in the residential sector; (2) Raise awareness and promote dialogue among government and civil society actors regarding the development of sustainable energy policies, strategies and frameworks, incorporating experiences from civil society actors; (3) Enhance capacities of civil society actors to monitor and evaluate environmental impacts and trends; and (4) Strengthen organizational and technical skills, strategic planning and advocacy capacities of Green Future, and improve its advocacy, communications and outreach, as well as networks and alliances with other civil society groups.

Project	Grantee	Description
Incorporation of community-level waste management issues in local development agenda in the Kakheti region	Center for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSRDG) USD 49,920	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, and 3. This project aimed to address low public awareness and participation of local communities in community-level waste management issues in the Kakheti region as a pilot project. Specifically, it aimed to demonstrate participatory waste management planning in 55 target communities of the Kakheti region by selecting, mobilizing, sensitizing and engaging local communities in identifying priority local waste management issues and advocating for action on these issues with local governments and other potential financing institutions.

Impacts and Achievements

Increased access to environmental information. The project implemented by the Georgia International Development Agency (GIDA) was particularly successful in raising the capacity of local government representatives. While central government structures are more or less familiar with the requirements of the Aarhus Convention, local governments often are not. The situation has somewhat improved since the adoption of open governance principles, which oblige state agencies to publish all public information on their websites and make it available to all interested parties. However, regarding environmental information, there is still a large availability gap among local governments. As part of this project, 33 local NGO representatives and 38 local government officials attended round-table discussions on local barriers to Aarhus implementation. As a result, local governments and NGOs recognized their right to obtain different kinds of environmental information from business operators or other sources and raised their capacity to provide this information to the public via proactive publication or upon request.

Greater civil society participation in sustainable forest governance. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection was actively involved in the project activities implemented by the NGO Green Alternative to build capacities in forestland governance. This considerably strengthened the dialogue and collaboration between civil society and the government. About 500 decision-makers and civil servants, as well as representatives of other institutions responsible for and interested in land use and forestry issues, were reached through materials produced during the project. Additionally, the awareness of more than 20,000 citizens was raised on forestland governance problems and proposed solutions through publications, TV broadcasts, newspapers, websites and social media. Consequently, citizens and members of local governments have been more actively participating in the ongoing process of public hearings on the draft Forest Code. Through the thorough assessment of legislation, policy and practices of forestland governance, the NGO Green Alternative developed a forest categorization system, on the basis of which the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection elaborated the draft law “Forest Code of Georgia.” This new forest categorization system is one of the direct commitments of Georgia under the EU Association Agreement. It gives Georgia the opportunity to contribute to the “Emerald network”—a network of protected areas to conserve the wild flora and fauna of Europe and their natural habitats. This is another important step toward harmonization with EU legislation.⁵ Green Alternative further prepared comments and recommendations on other relevant draft laws formulated by the Ministry, including

5 The Emerald network was launched by the Council of Europe as part of its work under the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats or Bern Convention. Creation of the “emerald network” by 2017 is one of the important commitments of Georgia under the EU Association Agreement.

the “EIA Law” and the “Biodiversity Protection Law.” Additionally, Green Alternative formulated recommendations for the improvement of participation mechanisms—recommendations that were also reflected in draft laws.

Policy recommendations for sustainable energy solutions. The project implemented by the NGO Green Future provided overall policy recommendations for local and regional authorities for improved environmental governance, and shared relevant information and knowledge of innovative and cost-efficient energy technologies. These renewable (RE) and energy efficiency (EE) technologies for the rural residential sector can be adapted to local conditions with a high replication potential. The project provided space to discuss existing problems and barriers for RE development and defined the role of different stakeholder groups. Policy recommendations for the development of RE and EE technologies and the promotion of related environmental governance principles in Georgia have been developed by the project experts. In general, the project contributed to enhanced capacities of stakeholder groups, engaging them in national or subnational policy analysis and dialogue processes related to the energy sector. The project also facilitated the formation of civil society networks, multistakeholder roundtables and panels that continue to enable civil society to provide input to government officials on a variety of environmental governance issues.

Future environmental leaders educated on community-level waste management. Through EU-NGOs support, the Center for Strategic Research and Development (CSRDG) prepared educational materials to raise awareness about waste management. These included training modules for communities and local school children, a guidebook on community/civil society participation in waste management, and a short documentary film on related problems in



Community clean-up activity in the Kakheti region, CSRDG, EU-NGOs Georgia

local communities. These materials reached over 500 people directly and are now widely available online as well. The project has also helped about 50 schools to establish and strengthen ecoclubs—voluntary clubs of school students and teachers with the purpose of after-school environmental education, as well as supporting youth and community environmental activities. Typical activities of ecoclubs, which contain 20-25 members and are led by students, include student trainings in and discussions on environmental issues, classroom and field research and expeditions, summer ecocamps, advocacy and awareness raising campaigns, and implementing solutions to local environmental problems.

Development of community action plans for waste management. Fifty-five community action plans have been developed in the Kakheti region with community participation, with the aim of integrating them into municipal solid waste management plans by local governments. The guidebook developed in the CSRDG project on community participation in waste management is intended to serve as a manual for the waste governance efforts of these communities. The project also established very close linkages with other on-going waste management projects to build upon their results and implement complementary or joint activities.

3. LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Growing negative impact of mining in forestlands. Based on an assessment of mining impacts on forests, derived from roundtable discussions and the development of a case study, the Green Alternative project team and other stakeholders concluded that mining activities pose a fast-growing threat to forest ecosystems, and that policy changes are urgently needed. Green Alternative's recommendation to solve these problems is to harmonize forestry legislation (i.e. the Forest Code) with EIA Legislation, in accordance with requirements of the EU Association Agreement.

Effectiveness of social media in awareness-raising campaigns. The project implemented by GIDA has shown that social media can play a very positive role during implementation of different activities. GIDA used this tool for planning all advocacy actions, which proved to be very effective. It mobilized students and youth using social media tools in an advocacy campaign to improve implementation of the Aarhus Convention. Overall, CSOs and students showed great interest in participating in activities to raise awareness and build skills on environmental issues, but further capacity building for local CSOs and local governments will be necessary for stronger and more effective participatory implementation of the Aarhus Convention.

Local governments need to be actively involved in environmental governance. Municipalities lack relevant experience and environmental governance is something rather new and unclear for many local decision-makers. They often do not understand the positive link between environmental governance and socioeconomic development and hence rarely drive environmental initiatives in collaboration with civil society. For effective and sustainable socio-economic development, it will be important that local authorities increase their participatory skills, collaborating with the various stakeholder groups, participating in trainings and constructive dialogues, and developing their capacities in this direction.

The empowerment of women is key in the promotion of sustainable energy solutions. Women are important players in household energy use. However, representation of women in decision-making positions is still low and they are often unable to voice their specific energy concerns. With women among the most vulnerable groups of society to energy cost and supply, empowering women will be key to developing adequate and sustainable energy solutions in Georgia.

Micro-grants could promote community ownership of local waste management plans. A microgrant component that provides access to local finance could be a good complement to the community waste management action plans developed in 55 Kakheti communities. It could provide a strong mechanism for mobilizing communities, building greater local ownership through community co-funding, as well as enhancing waste management implementation capacities of target communities through the ability to test innovative waste management approaches on-the-ground. In addition, microgrants could provide a demonstration effect to donors and communities to incentivize community waste management, achieving catalytic effects.

Youth engagement is critical to foster environmental behavior in the future. Integration of environmental issues into school programs has a substantial positive effect on community awareness. Youth are effective messengers, advocates and change agents. They can advocate for environmental protection and can lead by example. Through eco-clubs, for example, children learn about local environmental issues and actively participate in addressing them, acquire research skills, become proponents for environmental protection and promote environmentally friendly behavior. In the end, they become concerned citizens who can make informed decisions and positively influence decisions of others. Eco-clubs, through the application of peer networks, social media or other tools, as well as conducting awareness campaigns, are effective tools for youth engagement, outreach, advocacy and behavior change, and thus represent strong mechanisms for influencing decision-making.



Final presentation of project results, CSRDG, EU-NGOs Georgia



MOLDOVA

1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Environmental concerns

Like other countries in the region, Moldova is facing a number of environmental problems. Inadequate management of solid waste causes pollution of soil, air and water; a lack of sustainable forest management and agricultural practices causes soil degradation and biodiversity loss; rivers and wells are heavily polluted because of the use of agricultural chemicals, outdated water treatment infrastructure, and illegal storage of waste and manure; industrial activities and the large number of old cars in use cause air pollution in urban areas; and the use of fossil energy as opposed to renewable energy contributes to climate change.

Access to clean drinking water, in particular, is a key environmental problem that severely affects a large part of the country's rural population. Only 17 percent of the rural population has access to drinking water from a centralized system. Shallow wells are the most important source of drinking water in rural areas. However, most groundwater sources do not meet the quality standards for drinking water, due to high concentrations of fluoride, iron, hydrogen sulphide, chlorides, and sulphates, as well as excessive salinity. The Gagauzia region, with its predominantly rural population, is particularly affected by this poor water quality, which accounts for 20-25 percent of acute diarrheal diseases and hepatitis A (HAV) cases and 25-30 percent of somatic diseases in the area.

Public awareness and the role of civil society in environmental governance

The state of the environment has become a matter of national interest in Moldova. Therefore, civil society organizations who work on the environment—at both the local and national levels—need the capacity to assess environmental policies, make recommendations and propose initiatives to the government, monitor implementation of environmental laws, and advocate for improved environmental governance.

While in 2012 Moldova approved the Civil Society Development Strategy 2012-2015 as an important step to creating an enabling environment for civil society engagement, there are considerable gaps in the ability of civil society to carry

out these functions.⁶ For one, there is often a lack of interest among Moldovan citizens to engage in environmental initiatives, in part because access to up-to-date information on the state of the environment is insufficient. Although Moldova is a party to the Aarhus Convention, with a mandate to make environmental information readily available to all, in reality there are still many obstacles to information access.⁷ This lack of environmental information is compounded by a general lack of environmental education and few opportunities to develop the capacity for environmental action. As a result, communities are mostly incapable of solving local environmental issues, such as drinking water contamination.

There is thus an urgent need to raise awareness among the environmental community and the general public, and to build their capacity to participate in environmental decision-making. Indeed, at this time, the Ministry of Environment is in the process of developing several important environmental policies. These draft laws and regulations need adequate public input. Thus, environmental NGOs and other local groups will need significant capacity building in order to monitor whether and how the planned activities are implemented, to assess whether the objectives have been achieved, and if necessary, to amend and supplement these policies.

Current environmental policy situation

In June 2014, the Republic of Moldova signed the Association Agreement with the European Union and adopted its Environment Strategy for 2014-2023, which aims to align the fundamental national policy documents to European environmental standards. In keeping with its Environment Strategy, the government has outlined a number of objectives aimed at ensuring the Moldovan population the right to a healthy and sustainable environment, in harmony with economic and social welfare, but the actual level of public participation needs to improve considerably.

One step toward these goals was adoption by the Parliament of the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which is intended to predict environmental problems of public and private projects and develop approaches to avoid or mitigate them. The regulations integrate EIA procedures into projects that are likely to have significant effects on the environment, including major infrastructure, agriculture, energy, food processing, mineral production and tourism projects, depending on their scale. The law establishes thresholds for such planned activities and the key output of the EIA is an action plan for environmentally responsible project design, as well the designation of performance indicators. For this action plan to be effective, the EIA may also recommend changes to laws and institutional structures.

Despite these encouraging signs, sustainable development has not yet emerged as a core principle of policy development in the country. Promoting sustainable development is a difficult task for the Ministry of Environment because the country's environmental requirements are frequently seen as a liability rather than an asset for improving social well-being. So far, there has been a lack of studies on the implementation of environmental policies, yet it is vital to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the 2014-2013 Environmental Strategy with the active involvement of all stakeholders, including civil society. Unfortunately, civil society groups have not been adequately engaged in the process of developing legislation such as the EIA law, and indeed currently lack sufficient understanding of EIAs. Hence, all stakeholders need to be brought together to create an adequate knowledge base on EIA, and to build the capacities they need to participate in a constructive dialogue on EIA policies.

6 European Commission (EC). 2014. Moldova – EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017.

7 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). 2014. Environmental Performance Reviews: Republic of Moldova; Third Review. United Nations, New York and Geneva.

2. EU-NGOs ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

The portfolio of EU-NGOs-supported projects in Moldova involved a diverse set of stakeholders and civil society groups and covered a broad spectrum of initiatives, from educating environmental journalists, to improving civil society participation in EIA processes, to developing networking tools such as computer gaming to improve participation in environmental governance.

Project Overview and Contribution to Capacity Outcomes

Six local projects were supported through grants to community-based organizations of between USD 8,758 and USD 49,900. The following table outlines these community-led projects as well as their contributions to the Capacity Outcomes defined by the EU-NGOs approach.



Certificates for environmental advocacy and project development trainings, EU-NGOs Moldova

Table 6: EU-NGOs Community-Led Projects in Moldova

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Consolidation between NGO and local public authorities and activation of civil society in the struggle for the protection of resources and the quality of potable water in Bugeac steppe</p>	<p>INQUA-Moldova USD 22,782</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1 and 2. The purpose of this project was to inform NGOs, local public authorities and the rural population of Gagauzia, many of whom are ethnic minorities, of their right to a healthy environment, the safe use of water and the effect of water quality on human health. For this project, INQUA-Moldova organized events such as round tables, conferences, competitions, exhibitions, tours and presentations to involve a broad range of stakeholders and ensure civil society participation in activities, as well as knowledge and experience sharing.</p>
<p>National environmental agenda: better environmental governance through communication</p>	<p>Association of Journalists for Environment and Eco Tourism from RM (AJMTEM) USD 35,675</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2 and 5. This project aimed to strengthen the relationship between journalists, NGOs and authorities active in environment-related fields. Activities included skills development of journalists with respect to environmental topics, policy and environmental governance. This project also piloted a course in Environmental Journalism at the State University, and developed the Practical Guide to Environmental Journalism. At the same time, AJMTEM aimed to promote public awareness on environmental topics through articles in local and national media, and developed an online platform gathering related official news.</p>
<p>MEGA game: strengthening environmental governance in Moldova through innovative e-learning and collaboration platform for environmental action</p>	<p>Moldovan Environmental Governance Academy (MEGA) USD 8,758</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2 and 4. The main goal of this project was to strengthen the ability of environmental civil society groups and individual environmentalists in Moldova to cooperate with each other, as well as to help them mobilize, educate, and engage communities in the Bic River basin and Gagauzia to participate in policy-making and action regarding water management in the region. To do this, the project developed an innovative e-learning and collaboration platform called the “MEGA Game: the game with impact.” This game provided MEGA and other organizations with a user-friendly platform to create missions for environmental initiatives in different fields aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), connect them with pre-recorded video trainings and courses, organize them into quests, assign rewards, receive and manage mission reports, give feedback to project participants and volunteers, and contact them at any point of the project implementation process.</p>

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Enforcing environmental governance in Moldova by involving the public in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process</p>	<p>Public Association EcoContact USD 49,900</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1 and 4.</p> <p>The main idea of the project was to support the implementation process of the National Environmental Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2014-2023 as well as the Association Agreement of the Republic of Moldova and the European Union. According to these two main documents, Moldova committed to change the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) mechanism. In 2014, the new Law on EIA was approved, but the mechanism for implementation of this Law was not yet put into place. The primary objective of this project was hence to develop a participatory mechanism for the implementation of EIAs in Moldova and provide tools for public participation in the EIA process.</p>
<p>Monitoring for better environmental governance</p>	<p>Ecological Movement of Moldova (EMM) USD 40,065.50</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 3 and 5.</p> <p>The project aimed to improve environmental governance processes by achieving four specific objectives: (1) Strengthen the capacity of the NGO Ecological Movement of Moldova (EMM) to monitor the implementation and elaboration of laws, EU directives, strategies and programs planned by the Ministry of Environment at the national level; (2) Promote knowledge transfer to other NGOs and capacity building for monitoring the environmental projects of NGOs working at the regional level; (3) Encourage dialogue between government actors and civil society to harmonize the legal framework necessary for good environmental governance; and (4) Raise awareness on the importance of participation in the implementation of environmental policies.</p>
<p>Building stakeholder capacity: key element for environmental governance in the Lower Prut region</p>	<p>Ecological Counseling Center Cahul (ECC Cahul) USD 41,820.00</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1 and 2.</p> <p>This project aimed to contribute to biodiversity conservation and the expansion and development of state protected areas.</p> <p>This was achieved through two specific objectives: (1) Strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to participate in local policy analysis and dialogue processes related to the creation of a Biosphere Reserve in the Lower Prut region; and (2) Sensitization of stakeholders on the importance of creating a Biosphere Reserve in the Lower Prut region and intervention measures to support local authorities in pursuing such action.</p>

Impacts and Achievements

Increased awareness of water quality issues in Gagauzia. In its project in Gagauzia, INQUA-Moldova strengthened the understanding of public authorities, civil society organizations, travel agencies, and media representatives about local water quality, including indicators of potable water quality, measures of treatment and conservation, pollution prevention, and water-saving approaches. To inform the public of the water quality of wells, NGO volunteers installed information boards at 60 wells on the region's tourist routes. In addition, an interactive map of local water sources was developed and can be viewed at an eco-ethnic center "Water and Health" in the village of Avdarma.

Greater involvement of the media in environmental governance. A trained generation of journalists able to report and analyze environmental issues is essential to an informed and environmentally educated society that is actively involved in decision and policy making. To achieve this goal, AJMTEM strengthened capacities of 53 journalists to write about the environment and helped create a network of journalists covering topics such as pollution, biodiversity, and water resources management. Each of the journalists involved in the project (a mix of radio, TV, and newspaper journalists) developed at least one reporting piece each during the project. Currently, 15 of these journalists systematically write about the environment, with the topic now found in national news. Through roundtables and press clubs, the project initiated a cooperative relationship between environmental NGOs, local and central authorities, and the media. At the same time, the project developed an app (called "Official Alert") for mobile phones or personal computers that gives the general public direct access to environmental information, thus empowering their involvement in environmental governance.

Successful use of gaming as a tool to engage environmental actors. The project implemented by MEGA considerably improved participatory approaches to community-based environmental management and governance. By harnessing the power of gaming (the MEGA Game) to spur interest and connectivity in solving public issues, MEGA successfully connected 17 environmental NGOs in Moldova and actively engaged five teams of volunteers from diverse organizations in collaborative data gathering, research, awareness-raising, and on-site environmental action in three regions. As a result, these teams continue working together to achieve greater positive impact, specifically targeted at improved water management in their communities. Through the MEGA Game, the organization also helped engage people in climate change mitigation activities, winning a number of awards, including at "[ClimateLaunchpad](#)."

Improved legal framework for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The project implemented by EcoContact facilitated the engagement of various stakeholders, including NGOs, the central government, local authorities, CSOs, businesses, academic institutions, experts and the media in the EIA process. To achieve this, it developed an *EIA Implementation Guide* for the public, which has been adopted by the Ministry of Environment as its official tool. It also established an EIA Database for the processing of documents by the Ministry of Environment, and published a *Guide on Public Participation in the EIA Process*. A case study developed on the EIA procedure in Moldova provides specific actions to be considered by central and local authorities when conducting EIAs. In addition, EcoContact produced a position paper on environmental governance concerns, including EIAs, which proved influential in improving the legal framework for EIAs. Indeed, EcoContact's activities in this project strengthened its position as the focal point NGO in the EIA field.

Greater civil participation in the analysis and monitoring of public environmental policies. The project implemented by the Ecological Movement of Moldova (EMM) improved the organization's capacities in environmental public policy elaboration and allowed EMM to transfer its knowledge to other civil society groups. Sixty community members, with a majority from rural areas, received targeted training on monitoring public policies, and 176 people participated in five workshops and a conference on Public Policy Monitoring, discussing draft laws, EU directives, strategies and environmental programs planned by the Ministry of Environment for 2015. Additionally, EMM submitted 15 documents



International Environment Day 2016, ECC Cahul and EMM, EU-NGOs Moldova

containing recommendations to improve drafts of public policies. A monitoring system of public policies was also developed, consisting of a Handbook on Public Policy Monitoring, including a description of the step-by-step process and the policy lifecycle from initiation to evaluation, while focusing on the monitoring phase. It further outlines how experiences at the national level can be adapted to and replicated at the regional level. Environmental NGOs participating in the project were given the opportunity to create and apply a unique monitoring system, produce monitoring reports, and establish contacts with local and central authorities, thereby gaining experience in lobbying the decision-making processes. Through the project, three working groups were established, one in each of the target regions in North, Central and Southern Moldova. Each working group is comprised of regional NGOs and government representatives and facilitates capacity building activities to help civil society groups participate in decision-making processes.

Greater public awareness of the need to establish protected areas in the Lower Prut region and participate in their planning. The NGO ECC Cahul helped environmental central bodies to raise national awareness and provide information on the implementation of national and international strategies related to state protected areas. Seminars and ecological lessons held through the project directly contributed to the implementation of objective 6.4 of Moldova’s Environmental Strategy (“Expansion of natural areas protected by state and ensuring sustainable management thereof”), which proposes to create two large natural areas protected by the state, namely the Lower Dniester National Park and the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, involving Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. ECC Cahul engaged in an active dialogue on environmental governance and management of the planned Prutul de Jos Biosphere, which will be part of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, with local authorities, representatives of public associations, and the local population

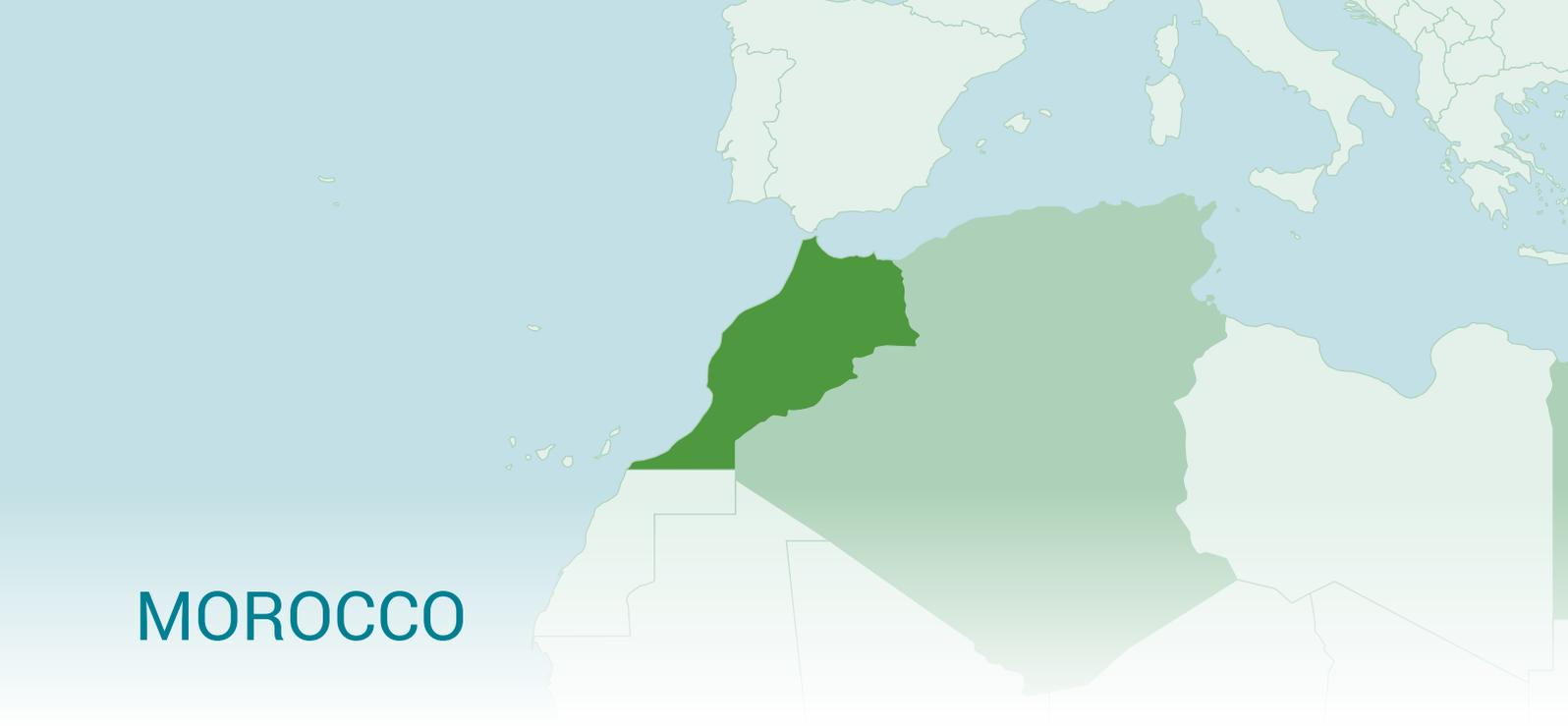
3. LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Media is key to raising public environmental awareness. Good environmental governance can only be achieved when everyone, from the young to the elderly, understands the importance of the environment as well as the need to protect and conserve it. For this purpose, the role of the media in information dissemination and education is critical. Thus, AJMTEM believes that training a generation of journalists to understand the importance of natural resources and the value of responsible institutions, and to reflect this understanding in insightful reporting on environmental issues, is essential to producing an informed and environmentally educated society that can actively participate in decision- and policy-making.

Modern communication tools and appropriate language can go a long way to spur interest in environmental governance and public policy processes. Bottom-up environmental governance, when organized, educated, and empowered in effective ways, has the potential to bring crowd-sourced positive changes. Nowadays, the spaces with the widest civil participation are found online, including social networks, video games, and other internet platforms, rather than conferences, round tables, forums, or other events for invited guests only. Therefore, to exchange environmental data, communicate it to the larger public, and engage this public in policy-making and real action, modern information technology (IT) and the internet should be used in environmental management and governance. At the same time, the presentation and communication of environmental strategies and policies also needs to change. With the modern information overflow, the attention span of an average person has been reduced. As a result, most people are not interested in reading long, complicated policy documents. To stimulate civic engagement in policy-making and implementation, the essence of such documents should be communicated in a simplified, visual, and understandable manner instead.

Extending gaming to a social networking tool will further build and sustain partnerships between different stakeholders. In 2016, important features involving achievements, social interaction, and teamwork will be added to the MEGA Game, transforming the gamified platform into a real social networking tool specifically for environmental NGOs and young environmentalists. It will thus combine the excitement and action of a James-Bond-style video game, the e-learning value of Khan Academy, the impact measurement of the WWF environmental footprint calculator, and the socialization potential of Facebook. To ensure financial sustainability of the MEGA Game, it will be delivered via the “freemium-premium model,” i.e. nonprofit organizations and individuals will use it for free, while for-profit companies will pay a fee for access.

Partnerships are vital to the success of participatory environmental governance. Willingness of state authorities to cooperate with civil society is imperative for participatory environmental governance processes such as EIA. The elaboration of guidelines and studies on the EIA process, as well as other results of EU-NGOs-supported projects in Moldova, was possible through the strong collaboration of EcoContact with the Ministry of Environment, which contributed not only to the development of useful instruments for the government, but also to identifying key legislative gaps in the process. Other strong partners in this process were EIA service providers who offered support to the authorities in conducting EIAs. The members of the NGO network also played a significant role in the development of the Guide on Public Participation in the EIA process by bringing their expertise, knowledge and perception of the process to the discussion table.



MOROCCO

1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Environmental concerns

Morocco faces a number of modern environmental challenges. These include water shortages due to reduced precipitation and over-exploitation of water resources; coastal degradation due to economic activities such as sand mining; and overconsumption of fuelwood, degrading forests and contributing to climate change, which itself poses a major challenge that will require substantial adaptation and management efforts in the future.

The coastal strip provides a good example of the intensity of current environmental threats. The coast has been subject to increased pressure from human activities such as urban development, industry, fisheries, and tourism, which have all had harmful effects on the biodiversity-rich coastline. Similarly, with more than 1,600 quarries and an annual consumption of sand reaching 20 million cubic meters, sand mining from open pits or underwater dredging causes destruction of marine ecosystems, erosion, and pollution, impacting the livelihoods of local communities.

Woodfuel consumption is also a major concern. There are more than 10,000 hammams (public baths) in Morocco, each of which consumes up to 2 tons of wood and 60 m³ of water per day, making them some of the largest consumers of wood energy and water in the country. In terms of water shortages, oases, which make up 15 percent of Moroccan surface area and have been included in the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, have been seriously affected by shrinking water reserves. While oases used to be important settlements for caravans in the north-south Sahara trade, they lost their social and economic function due to deteriorating conditions from water shortage; natural resource conflicts; climate change-related risks; disappearance of palm groves; high poverty and unemployment rates; loss of oasis good practices; and lack of basic facilities and services. All these issues contribute to out-migration of youth, driving rapid urbanization and rural impoverishment at the expense of agricultural lands.

Public awareness and the role of civil society in environmental governance

Morocco has one of the most robust NGO sectors in the MENA region and local NGOs working on climate change, conservation and sustainable development have demonstrated a greater level of activity in recent years. Nonetheless, the number of Moroccan associations working specifically in these fields remains comparatively low, with about 2,070 established associations (2 percent of all civil society associations) working on sustainable development and climate change in 2014.

Moreover, these NGOs have shown a low level of participation in the collection of environmental data, the analysis of public policies, and the monitoring of international negotiations related to climate change and sustainable development. This is accentuated by a lack of involvement of civil society in decision-making on major national programmes and strategies, as well as on environmental impact evaluation. On the other hand, the Environment Ministry and international organizations in this field show strong interest in elevating the roles of national associations to become strategic partners. In fact, The 2011 Moroccan Constitution and the National Charter for Environment and Sustainable Development attribute an important role to NGOs in environmental governance, providing a legal basis for their involvement in public affairs and enabling them to submit proposals and recommendations to local government councils, the parliament, the central government or to other public institutions. Moreover, several capacity building programs for NGOs have been set up by different public institutions to strengthen their capacity to more effectively engage in environmental governance processes. This has also contributed to a rapidly increasing number of NGOs active in related fields.

Generally though, civil society organizations still face barriers to participation due to limited institutional capacities, lack of understanding of complex legal frameworks, as well as limited coordination. To improve their capacities and roles in environmental governance processes, civil society organizations have started organizing themselves into associations, increasing their reach and credibility in the eyes of authorities.



Water shortages impact the social and economic value of oases, EU-NGOs Morocco

Current environmental policy situation

The new Moroccan Constitution grants every citizen the right to basic services, water, a healthy environment and development, as well as the right to participate—through civil society associations—in the development, implementation and evaluation of public policies. These new rights have been reflected in the Framework Law No. 99.12, enacted in 2014. This law, which is intended to support the National Charter for Environment and Sustainable Development, strengthens the role of associations and civil society in the achievement of sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation. It also encourages the participation of associations in the design and implementation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy, developed in 2014 and currently under review by the Government. The law also aims to continuously improve the mechanisms for public participation in environmental decision-making, as well as the availability and public access to information.

With regard to climate change, Morocco has ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and has structured its national efforts through the National Plan Against Global Warming (2009) and the National Climate Change Policy, which is currently under development.

Regarding environmental threats such as coastal degradation, woodfuel use, and water depletion, environmental regulations vary considerably. For example, there are no formal environmental regulations related to hammams. On the other hand, regulations on quarries and coastal development exist, but are difficult to monitor and enforce. This insufficient implementation of regulations frequently leads to tensions between local authorities and companies on one hand, and between companies and local residents on the other.

2. EU-NGOs ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

Morocco has been on a path of rapid economic development and the government has been paying increasing attention to environmental sustainability. However, there are still substantial regulatory gaps, and implementation of regulations, where existent, has been weak in many sectors with high environmental impacts such as sand mining, the operation of hammams, and water management in oases. Hence, EU-NGOs-supported initiatives in Morocco strongly focused on civil society empowerment in these sectors and in the area of climate change mitigation and adaptation.



Awareness raising on coastal management and laws, ESCO, EU-NGOs Morocco

Project Overview and Contribution to Capacity Outcomes

Four local projects were supported through grants to civil society organizations of USD 50,000. The following table outlines these civil society-led projects as well as their contributions to the Capacity Outcomes defined by the EU-NGOs approach.

Table 7: EU-NGOs Community-Led Projects in Morocco

Project	Grantee	Description
Strengthening the participation of Moroccan civil society in dialogues on national climate change policies	Association of Teachers of Life Sciences and Earth Morocco (AESVT-MOROCCO) USD 50,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1 and 3. The project had the following objectives: (1) Establish a national dialogue platform for NGOs that are active in the areas of sustainable development (SD) and climate change (CC); (2) Allow civil society organizations to become efficient and decisive national players, making recommendations and carrying out advocacy for environmental governance at local, national and regional levels; (3) Organize forums and roundtables for civil society consultation in the field of CC and SD; and (4) Strengthen the capacity of Moroccan civil society in the field of CC and SD, increasing the commitment of national NGOs to environmental planning and policy analysis at international, national, and regional levels.
Strengthening the participation of Moroccan civil society analysis, amendment and implementation of laws and policies on sustainable coastal management and quarries	Espace de Solidarité et de Coopération de l'Oriental (ESCO) USD 50,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2, 3, and 4. This project focused on coastal and quarry management challenges, with the specific objective of strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations to 1) analyze existing environmental legislation and policies related to coastal areas and quarries and formulate recommendations for better integration of environmental concerns, and 2) advocate for the amendment and implementation of legislation and policies in coastal areas and quarries.
Contribution to better governance of water resources in oases through the capacity building and empowerment of civil society to support and influence water policies	Oasis Ferkla Association for Environment and Heritage (AOFEP) USD 50,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2, 3, and 4. The primary project objective was to improve water resource governance in oases through capacity building and empowerment of civil society organizations to help them support and influence public policies related to water. Specifically, it aimed to strengthen civil society capacity in oases to form associations and to influence environmental programs, policies and law related to water; to access and use related environmental information and knowledge; and to participate in the development of effective environmental strategies, policies and laws.

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Development of Moroccan civil society's awareness of the environmental consequences of the current management of hammams, and creation of a dynamic synergy for the development of an environmental strategy to upgrade the sector</p>	<p>Solidarity, Energy and Environment Association (EnSEn) USD 50,000</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2 and 3. The project aimed to increase the awareness of Moroccan civil society of the environmental consequences of inadequate management of natural resources in hammams, and to create a dynamic synergy for the development of an environmental strategy to upgrade the hammam sector and reduce its adverse environmental impacts. There is a significant lack of awareness of various stakeholders regarding the environmental consequences of the hammam sector. Hence, the project included a comprehensive set of actions on capacity building, awareness and advocacy for the development and adoption of standards, regulations and specific strategies for the hammam sector.</p>



Workshop on environmental governance of the hammam sector, EnSEn, EU-NGOs Morocco

Impacts and Achievements

Enhanced networking among environmental NGOs, and monitoring of environmental challenges. One of the main achievements of the project led by AESVT-Morocco was the establishment of the „Alliance Moroccan for Climate and Sustainable Development” (AMCDD), which has members from more than 800 associations and networks of associations in the fields of sustainable development and climate change. AMCDD was established for information and skill exchange between NGOs and other stakeholders, as well as advocacy at regional, national and international levels for sustainable development and the fight against climate change. AMCDD and all its members monitor and track the status of the environment and analyze potential environmental and climatic vulnerabilities. Their analysis is based on shared monitoring reports developed by regional environmental observatories, as well as monitoring carried out in situ by members of AMCDD, including the status of water resources, biodiversity, wetlands, coastline, farmland, beaches, air quality, and management of solid and liquid waste, among others. In line with this, AMCDD plans to cooperate with donors seeking information on the environment in each region.

Strengthened dialogue between environmental NGOs and government actors. Participatory mechanisms have been established for dialogue between the member associations of AMCDD and ministerial departments and other public actors to develop regional solutions to environmental and climate problems identified by the public. Regular dialogue has been established with the Delegate Ministry in charge of the Environment, the High Commission for Water and Forests and Fight Against Desertification (HCEFLCD), the Ministry in Charge of Water, the Agriculture Development Agency, and the Ministry of Land and Urban Development, among others. This has enabled AMCDD members to provide recommendations on bills, public policies and sectoral programmes. Other fruitful collaborations have also emerged. For example, in February 2016, AMCDD and HCEFLCD signed a strategic partnership agreement to develop a communication, education, and awareness-raising program on wetlands recognized under the Ramsar Convention, and to encourage participation of various stakeholders in the management of these wetlands.

Greater involvement of environmental NGOs in international processes. AMCDD has helped national environmental NGOs gain greater stature and access to policymakers. This has allowed them to play a more prominent role in international processes such as the Paris Climate Conference (COP-21), where a delegation of more than 26 Moroccan NGOs participated, with a strong representation by women and youth. Lessons learned from this proved valuable in the run-up to COP-22, which was held in Marrakech in November 2016.

Analysis and advocacy around sustainable coastal management and sand quarrying. The project led by ESCO strengthened the capacities of associations, media and local government representatives to analyze and develop environmental policies related to coastal areas and quarries. ESCO helped to create a network of 26 associations representing the interests of citizens and communities in many parts of Morocco. This network developed a report on environmental aspects of the two sectors (coasts and quarries), and mobilized public opinion on issues of the coastline and quarries through multistakeholder roundtables, seminars, communication tools such as videos, and expert panels. One panel of experts was organized on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (GIZC) and the Law on the Coast. This was followed by a workshop on the implementation difficulties of the Coastal Act and development of recommendations for amendments to the Coastal Act that were forwarded to the Department of Environment.

Greater attention to sustainable water management in oases. The project led by AOFEP initiated a constructive dialogue between public institutions and civil society organizations on oasis water management. This led to the development of an advocacy paper (“Water resources in the oases of South-East Morocco: challenges and opportunities”) promoting enhanced water management in oases, particularly taking into account climate change impacts, agroecology changes, the use of traditional knowledge and groundwater conservation methods. This paper provided the basis for



Roundtable discussion on coastal management and laws, ESCO, EU-NGOs Morocco

a collaborative and integrated approach to water management in oases and helped bring about a change of mindset among the stakeholders regarding their respective roles. These activities improved civil society understanding of oasis water issues and facilitated a culture of information exchange and collaboration between the provinces.

Increased awareness of the environmental consequences of the hammam sector. The project led by EnSEn conducted a thorough analysis of the hammam sector, with participation of all relevant stakeholders such as civil society, hammam owners and users, as well as policy makers. The data produced by the analysis has helped stakeholders to appreciate the issues involved and has inspired two regional workshops in Rabat and Oujda. The document resulting from this work now represents an important advocacy tool for the promotion of more environmentally sustainable hammams, i.e. using energy-efficient boilers, solar energy, and other sustainable technologies. Moreover, a book based on this work has been produced, titled „Climate change and sustainable governance of the hammam sector in Morocco,“ and a summary has been presented at the COP-22 event in Marrakech. This will strengthen the advocacy work that has been started, and specifically address decision makers. It will also serve to sensitize donors, thus mobilizing other funding mechanisms to continue the work.

As a result of the communication and advocacy activities made possible through this project, the debate on the governance of the hammam sector has been taken to a national level. The majority of hammam owners have expressed interest in the environmental consequences of their facilities and many are now providing information to their staffs to fight against water loss. The upscaling of the project is also being promoted through innovative partnerships. For instance, the University of Sheffield, which conducts research on energy efficient lighting techniques, approached EnSEn about a partnership to modernize hammams in the MENA region. This pattern may lead to upscaling the Moroccan experience beyond its borders, inspiring other Arab countries.

3. LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

AMCDD needs additional institutional capacities to successfully continue and scale its activities. AMCDD will need permanent technical and administrative teams to ensure high-quality technical skills and the financial sustainability of its operations. Diversification of areas of expertise among the associations, networks, and members of AMCDD—especially at local and regional levels in the environmental areas of water, waste, biodiversity conservation, energy, local sustainable development and climate change—would strengthen the organization’s technical capacities. The establishment of a national AMCDD headquarters and regional offices would also support the organization’s visibility, accessibility and outreach capacities. To boost its organizational maturity, AMCDD should develop a capacity building plan, as well as a plan to develop better management processes, communication strategies, and specialization of members.

The geographic location of project sites needs to be carefully determined. The AOFEP project encompassed oases spread over a distance of more than 900 km and six provinces. The remoteness of these locations required workshops to be held in multiple locations, with long travel times for project implementers. Hence, a comprehensive implementation plan should be developed when choosing project sites so that suitable local partners can support effective delivery of project activities.

Improving the living conditions at oases requires not only protection of natural resources, but promotion of alternative livelihood activities. Historically, oases generated their income from hosting caravans seeking services and bringing goods. Today, world trade has moved to more accessible locations and cities, leaving oases cut off from the rest of the world, causing an exodus of young people. Future projects should explore opportunities for income generating activities, such as tourism. This will require a stronger focus on gender considerations. While women can play a significant role in water conservation activities, they also need to be able to participate in community projects and income-generating activities.

Involve community leaders in information dissemination and training activities as information multipliers. Partnering with credible and trusted community leaders, such as teachers, professors, imams, and political figures, and building their capacities to participate in environmental awareness and training initiatives, can considerably increase trust and cooperation by communities and local organizations. These partners can effectively function as information multipliers. AOFEP, for example, included religious leaders from the Council of the Ulemas of Errachidia (Islamic Scholars) in their project to highlight the importance of water resource conservation in oases in their messages. Such information multipliers are particularly effective in a country where religion plays such an important role in daily life, and where access to information and education is not omnipresent.

Access to finance and new partnerships will be key to environmentally upgrading the hammam sector. Despite greater awareness and understanding of the importance of reducing their environmental impact, hammam owners face a significant lack of financing for such environmental upgrades. To address this, EnSEn should conduct a study to provide concrete financial solutions, such as financially viable alternatives to wood energy. Innovative partnerships will also be critical to making the hammam sector more sustainable, not just by helping to support investments needed to upgrade the sector, but also by helping to revise current legislation, and contribute to long-term mobilization and advocacy initiatives. For example, a partnership agreement was recently signed between the EnSEn and the University of Mohamed V of Rabat to develop clean and sustainable energy solutions suitable for the sector. Further partnership agreements are currently being finalized with institutions such as: The High Commission for Water, Forests and the Fight against Desertification (on biomass energy); the Ministry of Energy and Mines (on energy efficiency and biomass energy); and the University of Ibn Tofail of Kenitra; and Sheffield University.



1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Environmental concerns

Palestine is one of the most densely populated regions in the Middle East, and Ramallah is an example of how the problems of pollution and overexploitation of natural resources are affecting the country. One of Ramallah's environmental concerns is that its residents are accustomed to burning solid waste as a means of waste disposal and domestic heating, due to the difficulty of waste recycling and disposal in the current atmosphere of political conflict. Wastewater treatment and disposal is another vexing problem. Moreover, the city's current infrastructure is not adequate to accommodate the current high population growth. Despite efforts from government and civil society, the city suffers from a lack of central urban planning, including a lack of provisions for environmental sustainability or preservation of natural spaces. The situation in the city of Ramallah can be considered representative of situations elsewhere in Palestine.

In terms of industries, stone quarrying is a significant environmental concern. While it is important to the local economy, accounting for about 5.5 percent of Palestine's GDP, quarrying involves deforestation, biodiversity loss due to pollution and habitat loss, soil erosion, as well as air, surface and ground water pollution. Although some 70 percent of wastewater generated by quarrying is treatable and reusable for quarrying, few quarries have implemented wastewater treatment methods.

Public awareness and the role of civil society in environmental governance

The Palestinian Authority has been increasingly engaging civil society to play an active role in policy development, as well as monitoring and assessing the implementation of laws and policies.⁸ Yet, weak participatory governance in environmental sectors and the resulting inability of civil society organizations to take a leading role in governance is a prevailing issue in Palestine. Creating policy changes at the national and local levels requires an increased level of civic participation in environmental governance by NGOs and other civil society groups.

8 European Commission (EC). 2015. *Palestine – EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017*.

However, this will not be easy, given the low level of environmental awareness in Palestine. According to a public awareness assessment in the Gaza Strip, people have a low level of concern towards environmental threats, both at the local and at the global level. When asked about environmental challenges such as climate change, people often identify the issue as more of a global problem than a local or personal concern. They have also demonstrated little interest in conserving the environment or pressuring environmental polluters to clean up, as their daily lives are mostly impacted by political and civil unrest. Despite the tremendous water shortages affecting everyday life, this issue is barely recognized as an environmental concern, but seen rather as a result of the complex political situation.

Insufficient access to information is a contributing factor in the low interest in environmental topics. For example, there is a significant lack of information on the effects of climate change in terms of changes in temperature, rainfall, and sea level. Since climate change will increasingly impact the livelihoods of the Palestinian population, the availability of such information is vital to make informed decisions on mitigation and adaptation. Nevertheless, the public has become increasingly aware of, and vocal about, environmental and safety issues. While companies are bound to more environmental behavior through a number of laws and bylaws to obtain certain licenses for their operations, they have also been urged by public demand to demonstrate that they are effectively managing environmental risks.

The number of Palestinian CSOs and research organizations active in the environmental sector has been growing in recent years. However, their skills for effective involvement in environmental governance need strengthening. In addition, they are mostly dependent on external funds, and they carry out their work in isolation. This insufficient networking and cooperation leads to duplication of efforts while foregoing opportunities to create stronger impact through collaboration with other civil society actors and stakeholders from other sectors. Civil society organizations will also need to step up their collaboration with the media to increase public awareness and to encourage a dialogue among stakeholders that raises pressure on the government to reform environmental policy and governance processes.



Students trained in green roof agriculture and waste recycling, NATUF, EU-NGOs Palestine



Capacity building workshop for participation in environmental governance, ARIJ, EU-NGOs Palestine

Current environmental policy situation, legislation and standards

The Palestinian Ministry for Environmental Affairs lost its status as a ministry and was transformed to the Environmental Quality Authority in 2013. This is an indicator of the decrease in importance and funding the Palestinian government assigns to environmental issues. Furthermore, there is a gap between legislation on environmental issues and actual enforcement of laws and regulations. Whereas in some areas the legislation in place, if properly enforced, is sufficient to tackle environmental issues, in other areas there is a need for better policies. This is further complicated by the complex political relations with Israel.

Nevertheless, since the early 1970s, regulations on environmental topics have increased considerably. There is growing emphasis on the responsibilities of economic actors to make information on their operations available to the public. This will require a system of documented, periodic evaluation of how well environmental management and equipment are performing. In Palestine, a key requirement for licensing any infrastructure or development project is to submit an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, which assesses the potential environmental effects of a proposed facility. However, when the project has been implemented, there is no structure in place to ensure compliance of management systems and facilities with environmental standards during operation. Hence, an environmental audit system is crucial to monitor environmental performance throughout an organization's existing operations. So far, the Palestinian government and CSOs have lacked the capacity to carry out such environmental auditing.

2. EU-NGOs ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

The EU-NGOs strategy for Palestine supported initiatives covering a broad spectrum of stakeholders and civil society groups. Activities ranged from increasing environmental awareness and supporting youth in developing environmentally aware behavior, to tackling environmental concerns such as burning solid waste and quarry mining, to promoting environmental standards and appropriate legislation at the policy level.

Project Overview and Contribution to Capacity Outcomes

To address the issues outlined above and improve environmental governance from various angles, six local projects were supported through grants to community-based organizations of between USD 17,400 and USD 37,600. The following table outlines these community-led projects as well as their contributions to the Capacity Outcomes defined by the EU-NGOs approach.

Table 8: EU-NGOs Community-Led Projects in Palestine

Project	Grantee	Description
Environmental town hall debates	Institute of Modern Media (IMM), AL-Quds University USD 35,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, and 4. The goal of this project was to enhance the capacity of NGOs to raise awareness on environmental issues through the media and thereby actively influence civil society as well as government policy. The more effective use of the media aimed to strengthen the impact of civil society organizations working in the environmental sector, leading to increased and better-informed civil society participation in environmental policy formulation.
Enhancing Palestinian environmental awareness and improving public participation in environmental governance	Ma'an Development Center/Gaza USD 34,800	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 2, 3, and 5. The aim of this project was to promote the role of civil society in conserving and restoring the environment in the four target areas Al Zawada, Bait Lahia, Gaza City, and Rafah. This includes empowering the targeted communities for active collaboration with the key governmental and non-governmental organizations influencing the environment in the Gaza Strip, and supporting healthy and sustainable environmental practices at the social and organizational levels.
Capacity building for environmental governance and management: quarries as a case study in the West Bank	Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem USD 37,600	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, and 3. The project was designed to strengthen NGO/CSO capacities to participate in consultation and decision-making processes related to environmental protection, particularly those dealing with quarries. Because of the complexity of environmental issues in Palestine, this project focused on one environmental problem to begin with (quarrying), with the intent of creating an effective model that can be replicated and applied to other environmental issues in the future. Therefore, ARIJ focused on accessing and generating information to guide governance and policy analysis related to quarries, as well as monitoring and evaluating current systems to identify gaps and further training needs.

Project	Grantee	Description
<p>Strengthening environmental governance by building the capacity of NGOs in environmental auditing</p>	<p>Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) USD 37,600</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. This project's goal was to promote environmental auditing procedures and raise compliance standards by enhancing the technical capacity of people in the environment sector, and by producing a 'Manual of Environmental Audit' through focus groups and round tables. Activities also included the preparation of training material, conducting training courses, compiling case study booklets, and organizing national workshops.</p>
<p>Strengthening environmental activists for better environmental governance</p>	<p>Juzoor for Health and Social Development USD 37,600</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, and 3. The project addressed the issue of environmental governance in six target schools in the Ramallah district, conducting educational activities including introductory courses on environmental education and four workshops on climate change, energy efficiency, solar energy and healthy foods. By creating a forum on environmental education, the project further aimed to facilitate knowledge exchange between different schools and to provide a platform for students and teachers to discuss environmental concerns and potential solutions.</p>
<p>Environmental leaders towards a sustainable community</p>	<p>NATUF Organization for Environment and Community Development USD 17,400</p>	<p>Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1 and 2. The project's objective was to train 20 environmental leaders to acquire the confidence, technical and management skills to meaningfully contribute to solving environmental challenges and creating environment-friendly communities. The project's approach was to contribute to the development of local communities through capacity building for self-motivated, dynamic undergraduate and recently graduated youth. The project involved a capacity building program consisting of 100 hours of training.</p>



Data collection in Beit Fajjar and Ash Shuyukh, ARIJ, EU-NGOs Palestine

Impacts and Achievements

EU-NGOs projects in Palestine increased environmental awareness considerably at all levels and across multiple sectors. Additionally, these projects facilitated a dialogue on environmental challenges involving stakeholders from different levels, and benefitted these stakeholders directly through education, skill development and knowledge exchange. In particular, the EU-NGOs projects contributed to the following impacts and achievements:

Media skills for better information dissemination. As part of the project led by IMM, twelve CSOs with an environmental focus were trained in media skills, increasing their capacity to disseminate environmental information to the public about core environmental issues such as waste water treatment, biodiversity conservation, and pollution and waste management. These topics were then discussed in live television debates. In this way, visibility and awareness of these issues were raised, and decision makers, CSOs and the public at large were brought together to discuss them. The informal network established during this project is expected to benefit further environmental projects through improved collaboration and coordination between stakeholders, especially since the project included organizations from different areas of the West Bank and with different core topics.

Training for greater public environmental awareness. The project led by the Ma'an Development Center raised public awareness of environmental challenges and sustainable practices through 32 training sessions for 800 participants, distribution of 1,500 printed leaflets on unsustainable practices, and establishment of a platform to discuss environmental concerns and solutions at the societal level. A document with recommendations on current environmental rules and policies was issued and referred to government executive and legislative authorities in the Gaza Strip.

Improved access to information about quarry operations. The database developed by the project implemented by the ARIJ, which includes all the collected and available information regarding the quarries in Ash Shuyukh and Beit Fajjar, will be integrated with the national database hosted in the EQA once the EQA completes its Industrial survey. This will strengthen the national knowledge base about pollution and emissions from quarries in order to foster adequate pollution abatement policies and practices within this sector and make information more publicly available and transparent.

Promotion of and training in environmental audits. The initiative carried out by the Palestinian Hydrology Group was the first effort to streamline environmental auditing throughout sectors and facilitate legislative and administrative support. The project provided participants working at various levels in their institutions with an opportunity to discuss their different understanding of environmental auditing, as well as the possibility to improve the harmonization process, addressing capacity building needs and legislation gaps, both at the national level and at the sector level. The project began with a legal and institutional review of environmental auditing to understand its current framework in Palestine. A road map and a practical manual of environmental auditing were then produced for the public, to make the process more systematic. Additionally, sector-specific environmental audit forms were developed to facilitate compliance by various sectors. Over 40 professionals were trained during five training days and two national workshops were conducted, serving as a platform to share knowledge and exchange ideas on environmental governance. A policy briefing paper produced through the project will inform future strategies and policies.

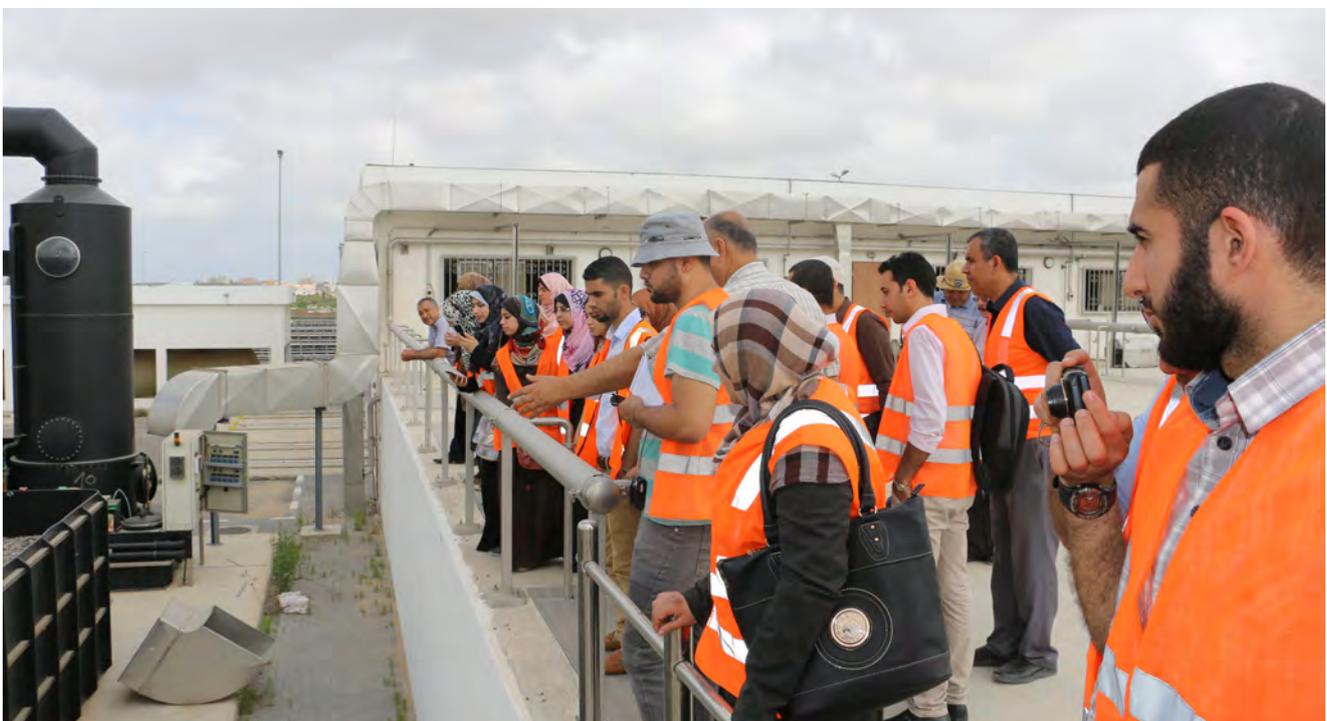
Better environmental education to prepare the environmental leaders of the future. Three EU-NGOs-funded projects in Palestine emphasized the importance of environmental education to train young people to become agents for societal change and sustainability. In the project led by Juzoor for Health and Social Development, trainings were held for teachers and students on climate change and energy efficiency, as well as practical trainings on recycling, building solar ovens and planting mini-urban vegetable gardens, among others. At six schools, recycling points and mini-urban vegetable gardens were set up, 'environmental promoters and healthy schools committees' were established, and a forum for environmental education and governance was set up to provide access to relevant information for the participating schools. Additionally, an Environmental Communication Campaign was implemented and technical skills of producing animated films on environmental issues were built through a training-of-trainers approach. In the project led by NATUF, 20 college-age students were trained as environmental leaders with updated materials on climate change and other topics, and received additional training in environmental journalism and effective communication and presentation skills, which increased their capacity to promote environmentally friendly behaviors. Over 70 participants from the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (including staff and children) were also trained in green roof agriculture and recycling of unused waste such as timber, iron and tires. In the project led by Ma'an Development Center, 25 college graduates in environmental studies were trained in national-level advocacy. This group also formed a community-based monitoring and evaluation team.

3. LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

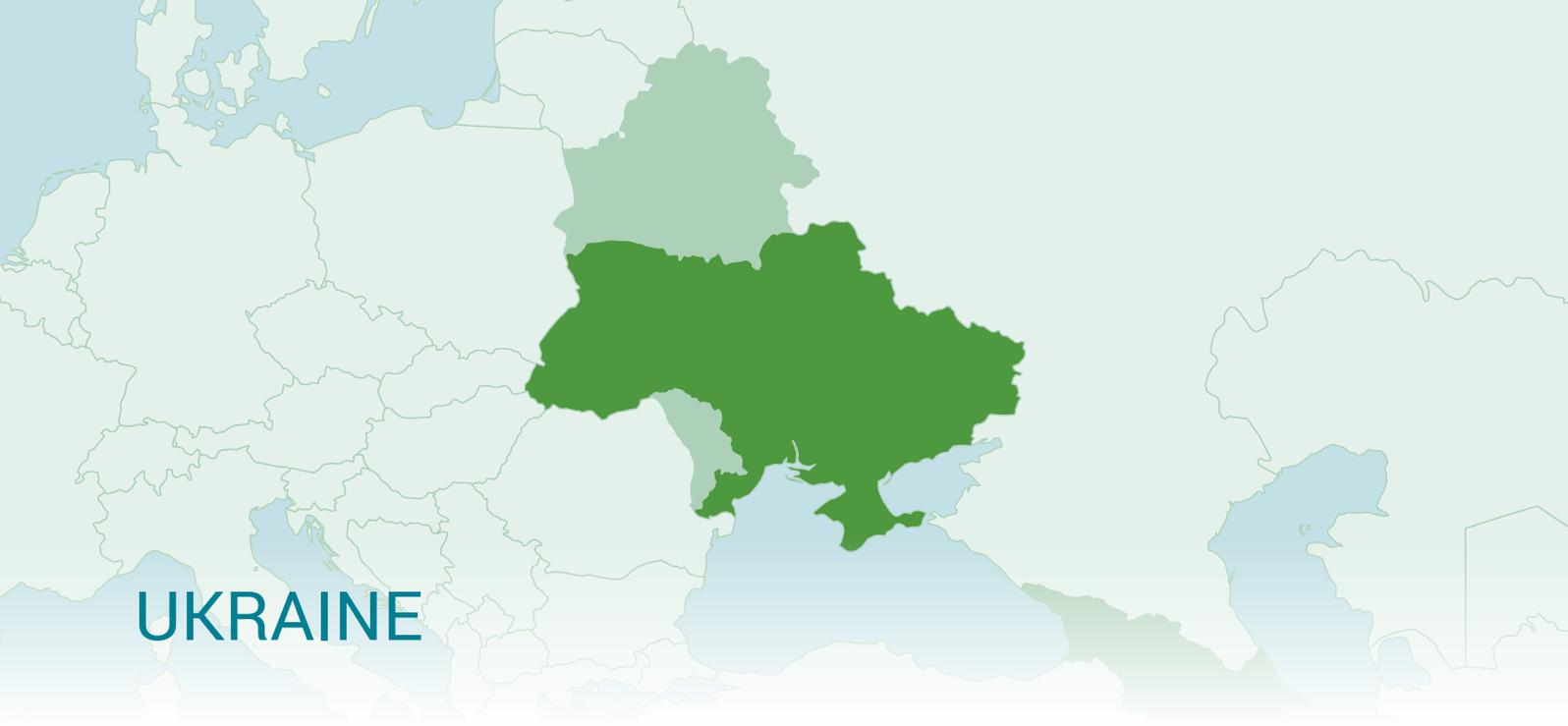
- » National environmental awareness is particularly low in Palestine, with limited NGO and private sector input in this field, and severely limited public sources of environmental information. The weak environmental underpinning of both the government and Palestinian civil society often discourages civil society actors from speaking up and participating in a discussion of environmental concerns.
- » The use of a community-led approach and ensuring the participation of communities in the different stages of the project life cycle enhances the opportunities to achieve success and bring about change. The experience of setting project goals and working hard to achieve them is fundamentally empowering, motivating people to remain engaged and building their belief in their abilities to participate and bring positive change through collective action.
- » There is a considerable lack of human capital in environmental fields in Palestine. However, students of all ages show great interest in environmental issues and sustainable solutions to today's environmental challenges. These young people can promote a change in the perceptions of society with respect to environmental concerns as well as changes in practices. The EU-NGOs projects that supported environmental education were an effective investment in

developing such potential agents of change. Indeed, the initiative implemented by Juzoor for Health and Development demonstrated that environmental education can be a powerful tool to change societal behavior in the medium to long term and can have a catalytic effect through the creation of broader networks and knowledge exchange platforms.

- » The project on promoting environmental auditing, implemented by PHG, was the first national exercise on this topic. The project showed the lack of communication among official bodies with regard to environmental auditing and the deficiencies of current legislation. On the other hand, the willingness of government bodies and NGOs to promote the concept of environmental auditing and to improve their auditing capacities by attending the training courses and workshops offered through the project was commendable. The cooperation of official bodies and key stakeholders in the implementation of the project as well as their role in promoting the added values of environmental auditing were among the key drivers for the success of this project.
- » The PHG-implemented project further highlighted the importance of public awareness, particularly of the private sector, as the private sector perceives environmental auditing as complicated and lacking clear procedures. Since an environmental audit is not only a legal requirement, but also a quality improvement tool, public awareness should focus on the benefits to the private sector in that it helps them to market and promote their products.
- » In the media-focused project implemented by IMM, involving environmental NGOs right from the start and giving them a chance to influence the selection of topics to be addressed in the trainings as well as in the TV reports contributed considerably to the project's success. Members of civil society, and in particular the environmental clubs of various universities in the West Bank, were invited as guests in the town hall debates. As a preparatory measure, guests were sent the TV reports prior to the recording of the debate to enable them to ask questions and provide informed inputs to the discussion.



Site visit of a waste water treatment plant in Gaza North, NATUF, EU-NGOs Palestine



UKRAINE

1. ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

Environmental concerns

Similar to other countries in the region, Ukraine faces a number of environmental issues that impact human well-being and biodiversity. Among these are air, soil and water pollution, as well as increasing solid waste. On the one hand, overexploitation has led to the depletion of natural resources such as minerals and water. On the other, solid and sometimes toxic waste is accumulating due to outdated technologies, unsustainable consumption and insufficient recycling practices.

Despite these environmental risks, the Ukrainian government continues to strive for economic growth without integrating environmental aspects into national, regional and sectoral plans, or adopting a sustainable development strategy. To protect human and environmental health in this process of economic development, it is crucial to develop comprehensive municipal and regional solid waste management systems with community participation; strengthen the cooperation of governmental bodies, local authorities, and nongovernmental organizations; support the development of an effective legal and regulatory framework; promote the introduction of energy-efficient technologies and investments in innovation; and strengthen international cooperation to incorporate best practices for sustainable development in Ukraine.

Legislation needed to reduce pollution and waste will include enactment of a Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) system to monitor and control pollution and make the information collected by this system available to the public.

Public awareness and the role of civil society in environmental governance

Though still insufficient, public awareness of environmental issues affecting livelihoods and natural spaces is growing. Generally, the overall environment for Ukrainian civil society has been described as relatively favorable in the region with regard to its legal framework and diversity of civil society actors.⁹ Nevertheless, considerable effort will need to

⁹ European Commission (EC). 2014. *Ukraine – EU Country Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society 2014-2017*.

be placed on awareness raising and educational activities to mobilize civil society for greater impact on environmental policy-making.

Currently, some strategies for “education for sustainable development” (ESD) have been introduced in schools, universities, and post-graduate training institutes. However, due to the absence of a unified national ESD policy, there is still a lack of knowledge about international processes and strategies in this area, particularly work undertaken by the UNECE, UNESCO and other key players.

Nevertheless, a national standard “Green Class” has been developed for the practical implementation of ESD principles among target groups such as parents, teachers and students. Furthermore, a draft of the National Concept for ESD was developed, but further elaboration of the document in conjunction with state authorities has been hampered by frequent personnel changes in government and the need to address urgent issues related to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Current environmental policy situation, legislation and standards

Environmental Education: Progress in implementing the UNECE Strategy for ESD underscores the effectiveness of using educational tools such as curriculum, teacher training, and vocational education to address environmental issues. Unfortunately, although Ukraine is an ECE member state and has made some ESD efforts, activities in the field of environmental education are not systematic in Ukraine and a unified national ESD policy is still lacking.

Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP): The EU Sustainable Development Strategy, adopted in 2006, called for a program of sustainable public procurement (SPP) as one move toward sustainable production and consumption. SPP was listed as one of the means to achieve sustainability in Agenda 21 and is considered an important step in constructing a “green” economy. At this point, almost all EU countries have formulated action plans to implement green procurement, having either developed their own criteria or adapted their strategies to the EU standards. In Ukraine, however, there are no clear strategies or national agenda to implement SPP in the country yet.

Pollution and waste monitoring and management: The Ukrainian Law “On Environmental Protection” provides for the establishment of the State Environmental Monitoring System (SEMS) to track the state of the environment and monitor pollution levels. The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources is the lead organization supporting this work and the State Environmental Inspectorate accumulates data on emissions and pollutants.

However, despite concerns over environmental pollution and waste accumulation, a Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR) system still does not exist in Ukraine. A PRTR is an environmental database of potentially harmful pollutants released into the air, water and soil. PRTRs are a practical way of implementing the public’s right to access environmental information and have proven an effective tool for environmental management by providing the government, industry, and the public with data on emissions. The creation of a PRTR system in Ukraine will require the political will to ratify the Protocol on PRTR, which was signed in Kiev on 21 May 2003.

2. EU-NGOs ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

As Ukraine is facing significant environmental risks, exacerbated by climatic changes and a rapidly changing economy, the country must work to integrate environmental thinking into economic policies, involving communities, civil society, the private sector and academia in the design of these policies, as well as in efforts to increase environmental awareness and adopt sustainable practices throughout the country.

Project Overview and Contribution to Capacity Outcomes

To address the issues outlined above, five local projects were supported through grants of USD 45,000-50,000 to community-based organizations. The following table outlines these community-led projects as well as their contributions to the Capacity Outcomes defined by the EU-NGOs approach.

Table 9: EU-NGOs Community-Led Projects in Ukraine

Project	Grantee	Description
Promotion and policy influence for sustainable development in Ukraine: From civil society actions towards national concept and standards	Prosvita, Ekologia, Stalyi rozvytok USD 50,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1,2 and 3. The project aimed to contribute to the inclusion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Ukraine's educational system, in line with the overall target of the UN Decade for ESD 2005-2014. This project further promoted development of the National Sustainable Development Concept (NSDC) with broad public participation through a partnership approach involving policy makers and civil society. Under this project, recommendations were developed by state bodies to strengthen Ukraine's policies on sustainable development. Additionally, a platform for further promotion of these policies, and an information campaign to inform all stakeholders are intended to increase outreach of the project. Finally, the project aimed to initiate the creation of a national coordination mechanism, such as a National Sustainable Development Council.
Strengthening of the legislative, economic and technological waste management system in Ukraine	Geosystem USD 45,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, and 3. The main objectives of this project were: (1) Develop recommendations for a comprehensive solution to the treatment of municipal and regional solid waste; (2) Provide a basis for settlement of differences between Ukrainian legislation in the field of waste management and the EU Directive 2008/98/EC; (3) Promote cooperation of public authorities, local governments, NGOs, scientific organizations, and businesses in the creation of a legal framework for adopting environmentally friendly, resource- and energy-efficient waste management technologies, and for promoting investment and innovation in such technologies; and (4) Establish and strengthen international cooperation in the field of waste management.

Project	Grantee	Description
Capacity building for the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Register implementation in Ukraine	Green Growth USD 45,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 5. This project initiated the process of designing a national PRTR system and raising awareness among the various stakeholders on the opportunities and responsibilities of such a system. The project further aimed to contribute to Ukraine's implementation of the Aarhus Convention. Project implementation is expected to result in a multistakeholder process following the "right-to-know" approach. It will assist the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources and other agencies in setting up and operating a functioning PRTR system in line with the PRTR Protocol and E-PRTR requirements.
Strengthening of the legislative, economic and technological waste management system in Ukraine	NGO "Green Future"/ Zelene maybutnye USD 50,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4. The objectives of this project were: (1) Development of proposals to amend national environmental policies and language to promote sustainable public procurement (SPP); (2) Implementation of an information and promotional campaign supporting SPP (two training sessions, a workshop, and a roundtable discussion), involving representatives of the key ministries and the Parliamentary Committee on Environmental Policy, Natural Management and Chernobyl Catastrophe Consequences Elimination; and (3) Development of a methodological basis for implementation of SPP to help carry SPP efforts forward.
Supporting CSOs in development of partnerships for sustainable use of protected areas in Ukraine	NGO "For a Clean Environment" USD 50,000	Project contributes to Capacity Outcomes 1, 2 and 3. The project aimed to increase public awareness of the value and importance of the Natural Reserve Fund (NRF) that currently covers 3.2 million hectares of protected areas and national parks in Ukraine. These areas are open to implementation of environmental, recreational, educational, scientific and research tasks involving the general public and representatives of civil society organizations. They could, therefore, serve as valuable platforms for the implementation of ESD principles as well as civil society engagement in environmental conservation. Hence, the project aimed to strengthen communication and facilitate partnerships between local communities, educational institutions, NRF staff, CSOs, and other stakeholders in related efforts.



Demonstration site for waste collection and recycling in Zhytomyr, Geosystem, EU-NGOs Ukraine

Impacts and Achievements

Strengthened framework and partnerships for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The project implemented by Prosvita, Ekologia, Stalyi rozvytok had a significant impact on the national policy on ESD. With the support of the Focal Point of the UNECE and in collaboration with the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine, the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Board of Reforms, scientific institutions and CSOs, the project prepared an overview of the national implementation process of the UNECE ESD Strategy for 2011-2015, and developed recommendations and an implementation plan for the ESD Strategy in Ukraine after 2015. A national standard to apply the principles of sustainable development in education was prepared, and capacities of the partner network „Education for Sustainable Development in Ukraine” for ESD were enhanced, including more than 40 participants from different regions of Ukraine. This partner network is a powerful platform for continuous exchange of information, best practices, and dialogue between civil society and government authorities, and provides opportunities for partners to engage in national and international events in the field of ESD. To support the network, the project provided online resources such as the website www.ecoosvita.org.ua, and the online course “Fundamentals of Sustainable Development” (<http://ecoacademy.org.ua/courses>), which covers twelve different aspects of sustainable development, including climate change, biodiversity, food crises, use of water resources, ecological footprint, a national environmental policy, gender equality and others.

Greater attention to waste management regulation, technology and public participation in waste management decisions. The project implemented by the NGO Geosystem brought public opinion about waste management to the attention of the legislative and executive branches of government by organizing public events such as the National

Forum „Waste management in Ukraine: law, economics, technology,” and the international roundtables „Hazardous waste management in Ukraine: problems and solutions” and „Legislative regulation of waste management in Ukraine.” Through such forums, civil society organizations and leading scientists were able to encourage urgent decisions in the field of waste management in Ukraine. Consequently, resolutions were prepared and submitted for review to the relevant legislative bodies and executive agencies. For example, the draft law on administrative liability for noncompliance with waste management and landscaping requirements has been developed, and is currently being reviewed by the relevant parliament committee. Another four draft laws on amendments to waste management-related legislative acts of Ukraine are currently being developed to improve processes such as safe waste processing, transportation, storage, and accumulation, as well as to introduce new technologies to the waste processing industry. In addition, various knowledge products on these activities were made available, including the website of the National Forum „Waste Management in Ukraine: legislation, economics, and technology”(http://vidhody.org.ua). On the technical side, recycling programs were developed, providing for the safe processing, transportation, and storage of waste, as well as introduction of new technologies in the waste processing industry.

Progress instituting a Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR). The initiative implemented by Green Growth raised awareness on pollution and waste issues—particularly the advantages of a PRTR—among more than 350 people from different regions of Ukraine, including representatives of businesses, state-owned enterprises, CSOs, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, as well as its regional departments and research institutes. In support of this, the project created a “Virtual School of PRTR” consisting of permanent online courses. On the basis of this work, the NGOs involved in the project, in cooperation with the State Ecological Academy of Postgraduate Education and Management, took a lead role in drafting and submitting to the government the PRTR National Concept—a document that defines measures for the implementation of a comprehensive PRTR system. The project team also took part in drafting an



Participation in the SGP Knowledge Fair, also visited by Ms. Cihan Sultanoglu, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, For a Clean Environment, EU-NGOs Ukraine

Informational Proposal on PRTR, which is a draft of the Action Plan for improving awareness on PRTR. By virtue of these efforts, a major step in the creation of a national PRTR was taken in February 2016, when the Parliament ratified the PRTR Protocol.

Policy recommendations for national legislation on Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP). The project team led by the NGO Green Future actively participated in the government working group preparing the draft Strategy of State Environmental Policy 2020 and helped prepare amendments, which, if adopted, will facilitate implementation of SPP in Ukraine as well as EU Directives on the integration of environmental and social standards into the system of public procurement. To build stakeholder capacities, the team conducted training sessions, roundtables, and workshops for some 340 people. In addition, the team helped develop a methodological basis for implementing SPP. This included the handbook “How to Implement Sustainability to Procurement?” and the launch of the website “Sustainable Consumption-Production” (www.stale.org.ua)—an open information and education platform that will help raise general awareness and develop skills of both buyers and contractors for preparing technical specifications for procurement, evaluation and signing contracts using SPP criteria. The team was also actively involved in efforts to amend six government strategies and action plans in an effort to foster SPP. These included the *Strategy of State Environmental Policy of Ukraine 2020*, the *National Action Plan for Environmental Protection*, the *Strategy of Reform of the System of Public Procurement*, the *Action Plan on Implementation of the Strategy of Reform of the System of Public Procurement 2022*, the *Strategy of Development of the System of Management of State Budget*, and the *Action Plan on Implementation of the Strategy of Development of the System of Management of State Budget*.



Youth empowerment activity, Prosvita, Ekologia, Stalyi rozvytok, EU-NGOs Ukraine

3. LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

Implementation of the UNECE ESD Strategy remains urgent for Ukraine. Further training of teachers in pilot schools, implementation of ESD plans in all schools, and the introduction of ESD in high school curricula are among the recommended next steps. A key requirement for the effective implementation of ESD in Ukraine is the preparation and adoption of the National Strategy on ESD and its accompanying National Action Plan by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The adoption of these documents will create a legal framework for the mandatory implementation of ESD in schools and educational institutions. In the absence of a strong state policy on ESD, the activity of the Partner Network on Education for Sustainable Development in Ukraine remains one of the best ways of promoting ESD in the country.

Public events facilitate dialogue and consideration of public recommendations in environmental legislation. Public events, such as the National Forum on “Waste Management in Ukraine: law, economics, technology,” made it possible to prepare resolutions to be submitted to the relevant legislative bodies and executive agencies. Additionally, such events encourage a dialogue between the general public, represented by NGOs, and legislative and executive authorities in Ukraine. This, in turn, will help to facilitate practical resolution of environmental problems with the participation of those affected in the future.

Sustainable environmental management is best promoted through constructive stakeholder dialogue. One of the most effective mechanisms to promote environmental management is effective dialogue between the Public Council (a permanent advisory body established to ensure participation of civil society in public affairs) and the departments and agencies of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. One potential mechanism to foster interaction and accountability of the Ministry would be the establishment of joint working groups, with representatives of civil society groups and the Ministry developing joint work plans and monitoring activities.

Market readiness studies can pinpoint commodities that are promising candidates for SPP. Market research has been carried out to identify the readiness of various commodities to be included in a system of sustainable public procurement. To promote SPP in government bodies, these research findings should be used to create new Terms of Reference (TORs) for products and services deemed to be good initial candidates for SPP. These TORs can then be disseminated among stakeholders, such as government institutions and local authorities. After this, the next steps would be to organize practical trainings and certification courses, and conduct demonstrations of SPP procedures to ensure awareness, understanding and compliance.



Impacts and Lessons



KEY IMPACTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM ON-THE-GROUND INITIATIVES

Impacts related to capacity building, civil society participation, and governance processes overall are often only evident after longer periods of time and continued commitment of stakeholders beyond project completion. Therefore, it is still early to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of initiatives supported by the EU-NGOs Project. However, through the experiences and achievements from on-the-ground implementation across partner countries, some key impacts and lessons can be highlighted overall:

Key Impacts

1. Greater NGO capacities and more coordination translate to heightened public awareness and greater impact on environmental decision-making. Low NGO capacity was a common baseline in the target countries of the EU-NGOs Project. To address this, the EU-NGOs project activities raised the capacities of local and national environmental NGOs in critical areas such as information provision, advocacy, environmental education, policy analysis, and legislative strategy. Projects also stressed the power of coordination and joint action by the NGO/CSO community. The success of this strategy in the profiled countries—achieved at very moderate cost with community-led grants—is reflected not just in greater public involvement in particular environmental issues such as waste generation, water management, or forest management, but in a general increase in public awareness of environmental sustainability, and greater motivation to participate in environmental governance processes.

2. Enhancing NGO capacities has helped to actualize the rights and principles of the Aarhus Convention. The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters—usually referred to as the Aarhus Convention—represents the consensus view of what good environmental governance entails. It defines the three essential rights that citizens require to become active participants in and contributors to local and national environmental governance: the right to access environmental information; the right to participate in environmental decision-making; and the right to redress in the event of governance disputes. While many of the countries participating in the EU-NGOs Project are signatories to the Aarhus Convention, in practice, the Convention is too often an ideal that is unattainable due to the lack of knowledge by the public of these rights and the lack of capacity on the part of the public and NGOs to exercise them. By upgrading the capacity of NGOs and CSOs to provide environmental information to the public in convenient formats, and by providing training in governance processes and opportunities for official engagement with government decision-makers, legislators, and planners, the EU-NGOs Project has greatly advanced the Convention's goals and its practical applications in the target countries.

3. The profile and practice of environmental education has increased measurably in target countries, providing a foundation for further gains in public participation in environmental governance. The case studies profiled the importance of broad-based education campaigns using articles, websites, public service announcements, social media posts, public roundtables, conferences, and other communication vehicles. But it also showed the power of advancing formal environmental education curricula and environmental education strategies at the national level. For example, Ukrainian NGOs worked hard to promote a national policy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) so that environmental responsibility becomes part of the daily practice and culture of the country, supported by school curricula. The reality is that today's students are the environmental stewards of the future. Their knowledge of sustainability concepts and the basic methods of environmental participation are essential to achieving the SDGs in the long term.

4. The creation of coalitions and networks of environmental NGOs and CSOs has greatly expanded the influence and reach of civil society in the environmental governance process. The EU-NGOs Project worked to reduce the isolation that has plagued many local and even national environmental NGOs, hampering their ability to affect policies and be

taken seriously in environmental governance processes. To this end, EU-NGOs-supported projects often included the organization or upgrading of environmental networks, which were in turn used to execute other project goals such as provision of environmental information or political advocacy around specific environmental topics such as waste or water management. For example, the Moroccan Alliance for Climate and Sustainable Development brought together some 800 associations and networks in common cause, greatly amplifying their messages and advocacy. This and many other coalitions in the target countries show that networks of civil society organizations working toward a common goal are efficient tools to exchange knowledge and promote change. The assembly and maintenance of such networks is some of the essential groundwork that civil society must undertake in order to be prepared and effective partners in environmental oversight, and to yield maximum influence on policy making and strategic planning.

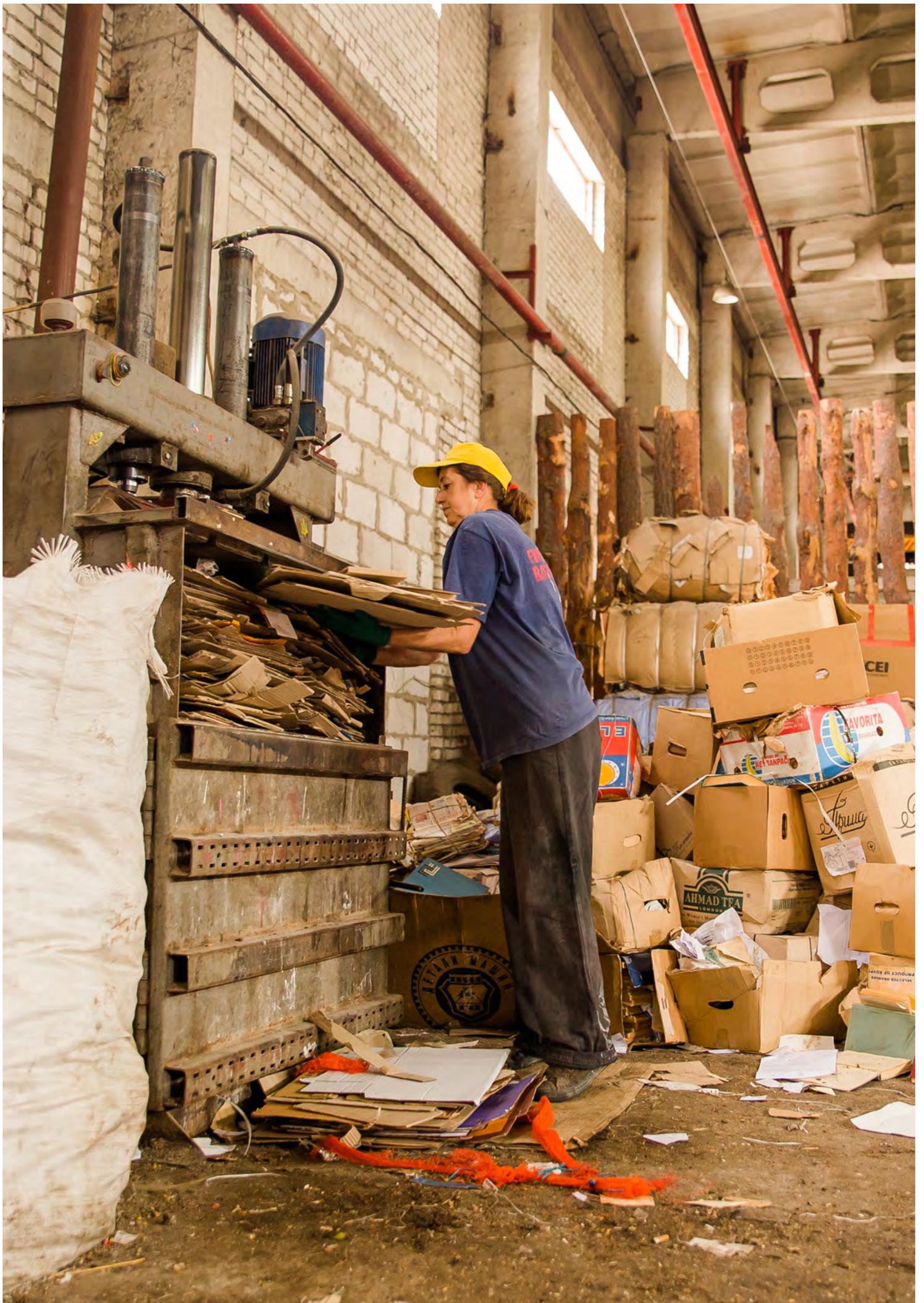
Lessons

1. New information technology and social media platforms are essential tools for education and public awareness raising and advocacy. Today, the “public spaces” with the widest civic participation are found online, including social networks and other internet platforms. To be effective and modern environmental advocates and public intermediaries, NGOs must master these tools. Because such tools are inexpensive, pervasive, and can influence youth as well as adults, they are particularly suited to the capabilities and budgets of NGOs, and are appropriate to the tasks they have before them, such as providing information to a diverse audience in compelling formats, and inspiring local and national participation in governance processes.

2. Multistakeholder partnerships and dialogue platforms are key to improving environmental governance in the long term. Multistakeholder partnerships and platforms are necessary to bring different opinions, expertise, and aspirations from different sectors to the table to develop environmental policies, provide feedback on the effects of these policies, and resolve conflicts and maximize benefits. They are essential to create the kind of consensus among stakeholders necessary for environmental policies to be actively accepted and promoted, rather than opposed or just tolerated. The EU-NGOs Project worked consistently to create such platforms in which NGOs and CSOs participate as full partners. These platforms provide the basis for collaboration and real inclusion in the consultation, policy-making, and oversight processes.

3. Both on-the-ground education and advocacy work must be combined with higher-level policy work for maximum effect on public participation and good governance. In every country, the EU-NGOs Project blended local efforts to improve public access to critical information and increase opportunities for public interaction with government authorities, with efforts to influence legislation and government regulations that define the larger context for environmental governance. This two-pronged strategy was deemed necessary to engage grassroots efforts for local governance issues, while still working on providing an enabling policy environment at the national and regional levels. One effective tactic in this strategy was actively promoting particular NGOs to increase their national stature so that they could act as expert consultants, directly participating in the lawmaking and policy-making processes by providing detailed comments and suggestions on draft plans and laws.

4. Scaling strategies can increase NGO effectiveness at low cost. Many NGOs used specific strategies to increase their reach and scale their effectiveness. Some were novel, such as using new tools like online games and social networks to draw people into the work of environmental monitoring or to expose them to environmental concepts and information. Other strategies were more conventional, such as using a “train-the-trainer” approach to increase the capacities of local environmental groups. One of the strengths of civil society groups is their creativity in adapting such approaches to magnify their work, often at very low cost. Encouraging such creative scaling, combined with strategic partnerships and networking, will be critical in the often resource-constrained environments in which environmental NGOs and CSOs typically work.



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